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the weekly
Standard

JUNE 19, 2006

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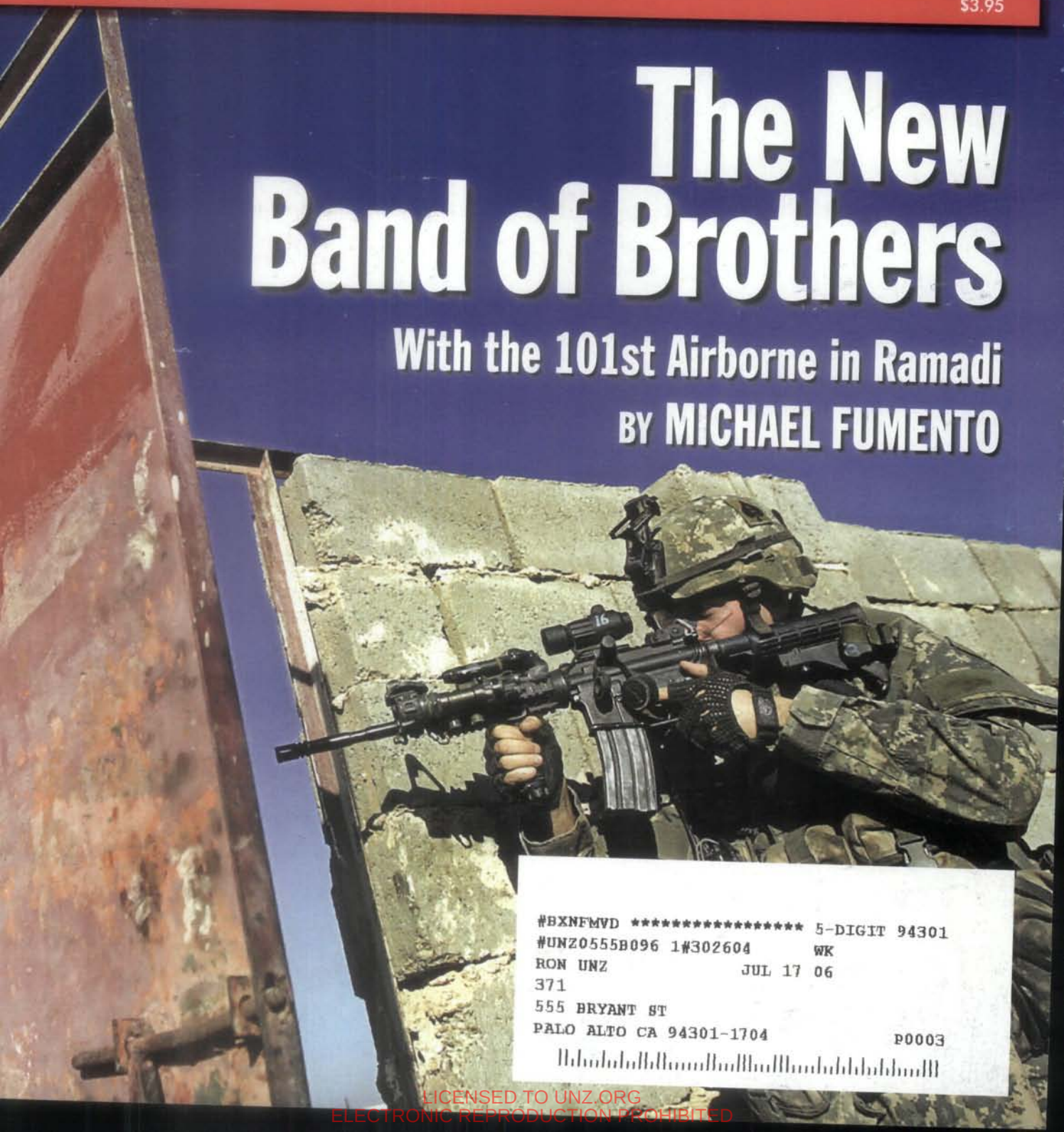
The New Band of Brothers

With the 101st Airborne in Ramadi

BY MICHAEL FUMENTO



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The Art of War

Don't get *Washington Post* culture critic Philip Kennicott wrong. He freely acknowledges that "virtually no one," including him, thinks the U.S. airstrike that killed Abu Musab al Zarqawi last Wednesday "was a bad thing."

But was it art?

Oddly enough, virtually no one else in the entire universe seems to have asked this crucial question. Nevertheless, Kennicott, in his June 9 "Images" column, has provided us the answer: From an aesthetic point of view, the bombing operation must ultimately be judged a failure—the specific problem being that the photograph of Zarqawi displayed at last Thursday's after-action press conference in Baghdad was "unsuitably framed."

Army staff semioticians, you see, chose to offer up the photo of the deceased terrorist's face "inside what appeared to be a professional photographic mat job . . . as if it were something one might preserve and hang on the wall next to other family portraits." Generally speaking, of course, frames serve "to bound an image, and close

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The U.S. military showed this picture of the dead al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi at a Baghdad

down its open edges; frames delimit, both physically and by extension, metaphorically."

But "in many traditions, a framed picture of the deceased suggests something like an icon, something to be venerated." And, sure enough, "photographs of journalists photographing the image at the news briefing showed Zarqawi's face looming above them. One might believe, for a moment, that they had gathered to bask in its exalted presence."

And one might also believe, for a moment, that Kennicott is being sincere about all this. But only for a moment. One quickly discovers, instead, that the frame per se isn't what's bugging Kennicott. What really fries his gizzard is that the people who made that frame obviously regard the framed man's death as an accomplishment.

"The framed image of a head," our critic fumes, "has a disturbing sense of the trophy to it—proof of another small victory brought home from battle." Imagine that.

American war victories? Always ugly. ♦

Les Néocons

It was a few days after 9/11, and France was to observe three minutes of silence in solidarity with the United States and with our dead.

Florence Taubmann, pastor of L'Oratoire, a grand and historic Protestant church a stone's throw from the Louvre in Paris, had the church bells rung. Then she went outside to join the observance. Only there wasn't one.

People were going about their business, traffic was bearing down, horns blaring, as if nothing had happened, her husband, journalist Michel Taubmann, told the daily *Libération*. It was a moment that helped give birth to the "Cercle de l'Oratoire," an informal group of dissenters from the weird ideology now dominant among a French elite that hates America more than it hates Islamofascism.

Nearly five years later, the Taubmanns have gathered around them such intellectuals as the philosophers André Glucksmann and Pierre-André Taguieff, essayist Pascal Bruckner, Stéphane Courtois, a coauthor of *The Black Book of Communism*, and Kendal Nezan, president of the Kurdish Institute of Paris, as well as young writers and students. Notable figures like Bernard Kouchner, cofounder of Doctors Without Borders, and Nicolas Baverez, biographer of Raymond Aron and author of a much-discussed work on French decline, *La France qui tombe*, participate in its debates.

Most of the leading lights are neocons in the strict sense: former leftists who long ago rejected Stalin and Mao and the Gulag, yet who haven't found a home on the French right. Their new journal, *Le Meilleur des mondes* ("the best of worlds"), takes its title from that champion of reason and intellectual freedom, Voltaire.

"France is caught up in a kind of ideological madness," says Cercle member Jacques Tarnero, a filmmaker and writer. "The French have indulged a taste for radicalism ever since we cut off the king's head." In a world where beheading is once again a live issue, say Cercle members, true lovers of liberty can't afford to be wrong about who their enemies are and who their friends.

It's almost enough to restore our faith in *la belle France*. ♦

Homelessness Update

In early 2001, we were convinced that with a Republican back in the White House, the media were bound to rediscover the "plight of the homeless"—which had been their favorite social problem until Bill Clinton came

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to Washington. (That was because they mistakenly ascribed the problem to Republican stinginess in the HUD budget, when in fact it had been caused by the civil-libertarian success in "deinstitutionalizing" the mentally ill.)

Happily, our cynicism proved unfounded for once. Even under Bush, homelessness has remained far from the headlines it dominated back in the 1980s. In fact, it's remained so far from the headlines that good news on this front has barely been reported. A reader sends this progress report delivered to a national summit of mayors, county executives, state officials, and community leaders who met in Denver May 10-12, under the aegis of the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness. This, from the ICH website:

- An 11.5 percent decline in homelessness in the Denver metro region, including a reduction in street homelessness from 1,000 to 600 persons since January 2005.
- Just a few weeks ago New York City reported a modest, yet "remarkable," 13 percent reduction in street population.
- A month ago, Dallas—the sixth largest city in our country—reported an overall decrease of a modest 3.3 percent, and a reduction in the chronic homeless population of 26 percent.
- In Miami last month, Mayor Diaz reported in his State of the City address a 30 percent reduction in the street population.
- In Portland, Oregon, the street numbers are down 20 percent, with 600 people experiencing chronic homelessness having been placed into permanent housing.
- In Philadelphia over the last several years the numbers on the streets have fallen more than 50 percent.
- In San Francisco a reported 28 percent decrease in homelessness.

"Why is this not news?" asks our correspondent. "Because it came out in a Republican administration?" Maybe our cynicism wasn't misplaced, after all. ♦

African Art?

A piquant detail in the ongoing investigation of Rep. William "$90,000 in the freezer" Jefferson: According to a June 7 report by the *New York Times*'s Philip Shenon, the FBI "raided the Maryland home of the vice president of Nigeria last summer in search of bribe money that the bureau believed had been paid to him" by Jefferson.

> In the affidavit, an F.B.I. agent, Edward S. Cooper, said cellphone records suggested that Mr. Jefferson visited a home owned by Mr. Abubakar and his wife in Potomac, Md., an affluent suburb of Washington, around midnight last July 31 with the intention of delivering money to the Nigerian leader while he was on a visit to the United States. The next day, the F.B.I. said, Mr. Jefferson told a confidential informant that he had delivered "African art"—which the agent described as code for a cash payment.

We report; you deride. ♦

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Casual

Ex-Friends

Marriage, I had foolishly believed, would save me from ever again experiencing the worst part of being single, the most wrenching, pimple-causing, sleep-destroying vexation incident to bachelor life. I am talking about getting dumped. C'mon, what other reason was there to "forsake all others"—the comprehensive, preemptive dumping with which marriage seals its lifelong commitment—than the reward of never again having to hear the lying words, "I just want to be friends"?

Of course marriage itself isn't absolute, foolproof protection against this misery. There's always divorce, the lung cancer of dumping. But aside from that, tying the knot, I thought, was supposed to mean that you were in the clear.

I was wrong. Even if your marriage is secure, you can still be dumped—by friends. Now, this shouldn't have surprised me. I myself was once a fickle playmate. When I was eleven, my friend Paul told me what another friend, John, whom I had stopped hanging out with, had said about me: that soon I would get tired of Paul, too, and start hanging out with someone else.

These days I am much more cherishing of friends—all of them, my buddies, my and my wife's "couple-friends," every last assorted character. Still, all is not joy and dinner parties in my social life. I have recently been forced to confront a new humiliation, one to whose existence marriage had blinded me: couple-dumping, as when one couple dumps another couple with whom they have been friends.

Z. and J., the couple-friends in question, were funny people with lots of good stories, many about themselves, like the one in which they got engaged—on their first date. The husband, Z., was a physical therapist and had slightly crazy views about health and what he described as the unleashing of one's great inner self. The two of us disagreed about everything, but we amused each other. Our wives had once worked together, which is how the four of us got acquainted in the first place.

Darren Gygi

The last time my wife and I saw Z. and J. was several years ago at a party at their house. I remember we made a special point of going because they were thinking of moving again, out of town.

At the party, guests toasted Z. and J., who were newly married. One fellow got up and for about ten minutes wandered in and out of a song whose words and tune he clearly could not remember. Thinking this a most unfitting salute, I got up and made a short speech listing reasons the couple should stay in town. Z. and J. came over and gave me a big hug.

But after that night, they vanished. I called a few times, leaving messages proposing dinner or even teasing them for not returning earlier calls. Their machine was on, but they never got back to us. My wife and I finally assumed they had moved.

A few weeks ago, my sister-in-law was over at our place, telling us about someone in the medical office where she works, a physical therapist who had said something funny. She mentioned his unusual name. It was Z., our old friend. Or should I say "friend"?

Z. and J. hadn't moved away after all. Realizing this, I immediately foresaw what would happen next. My mischievous sister-in-law, though asked not to, would mention us to Z. He, being a candid person, would own up to the fact that they had dropped us.

A week later my sister-in-law was back, as expected, with the story. Z. had volunteered that he and his wife had intentionally ended the relationship with me and my wife. The reason? His wife had had issues with my wife. (I rather like this detail, because of the two of us, my wife is much the more likable.) His wife was once my wife's supervisor, but since then my wife had become J.'s professional equal, which for some reason made J. uncomfortable—and led to you-know-what: our friends' decision to be, as dumpers say, "just friends."

My and my wife's immediate reaction was straight from the jilted lover's handbook (see chapter on disbelief): *They dumped us?*

The difference between couple-dumping and regular dumping, I now know, is that when you are dumped as a couple, you have someone else to help you argue away the possibility that the dumping in any way reflects your actual worth and desirability. My wife and I have made the most of this consolation of married life.

David Skinner

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Man and Wives

Contrary to the impression given by Stanley Kurtz, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did not attempt to keep its followers illiterate ("Polygamy Versus Democracy," June 5). The Mormons established numerous schools, including the University of Utah and Brigham Young University, and, in order to facilitate the assimilation of large numbers of foreign converts, experimented with phonetic spelling reforms.

Additionally, views of women in 19th-century Mormonism cannot be equated with the harems of the Ottoman sultans or with sub-Saharan polygamy. When Utah's territorial legislature approved female suffrage in 1870—fully 50 years before the Nineteenth Amendment granted women the right to vote in national elections—it enfranchised more than 17,000 women, thus giving Utah the largest population of female voters in the world. (They were disfranchised by the Edmunds-Tucker Act of 1887, part of the federal campaign against Mormons that Kurtz celebrates as a triumph for democracy.) And where is the evidence that there was less love in 19th century Mormon marriages than among their non-Mormon contemporaries?

Daniel C. Peterson
Provo, Utah

Stanley Kurtz assumes the *Reynolds* decision was not only correctly decided but that its rationale was sound. But with its extreme application of logic, *Reynolds* was deeply flawed. No matter what one thinks of polygamy, it is undeniable that the Mormons were treated unjustly. After the Mormons settled in Utah, the federal government arbitrarily decided these peaceful, prosperous, and isolated people were a threat to American "democracy" and, with the help of *Reynolds*, impugned their character, confiscated their properties, and coerced them to adopt a more secular culture (notably through the establishment of public education).

Why besmirch innocent people to portray the lunacy of gay marriage? Gay marriage should be opposed because it is unsound public policy, not because early Mormons were somehow antidemocratic.

Paul T. Mero
Salt Lake City, Utah

They Fought the Law ...

Regarding Fred Barnes's "How to Lose the House" (May 29): I owned and operated businesses in Florida that were very dependent on Hispanics as customers and employees. My efforts, and the additional costs, to make sure I operated within the law appear now to have been a waste of time. I consider myself a compassionate conservative, but never have I thought that this includes encouraging amnesty for those who break the law. If the federal government offers amnesty for illegal aliens, I would not be surprised if a movement arises for a third political party.

Houston E. Ball
Knoxville, Tenn.

Nuclear Options

William Tucker rejoices over the momentum to revive nuclear electricity as the purported solution to global warming without even mentioning two dreadful but very probable consequences ("Nuclear Proliferation," June 5). First, terrorists would have easier access to plutonium and partially enriched uranium for making nuclear explosives. Second, gene-based health miseries would multiply due to increased exposure to nuclear pollutants, especially from sloppy handling of radioactive wastes in third-world nations. Greater energy efficiency would provide far more "new" energy than would thousands of additional nuclear power plants. Additionally, energy efficiency produces no radioactive targets for terrorists, no legacy of radioactive poisons for our descendants to try containing for thousands of years, and no exposure to ionizing radiation.

John W. Gofman
Berkeley, Calif.
Egan O'Connor
San Francisco, Calif.

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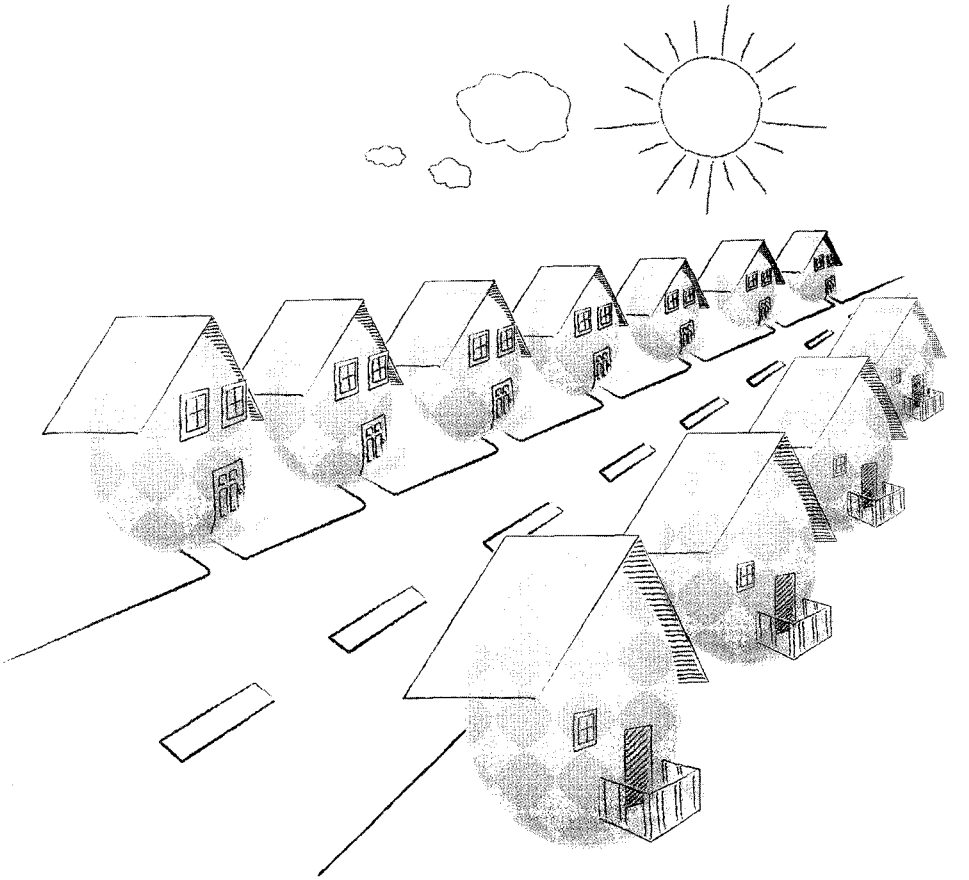

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An Open Letter to Congress: Don't Weaken America's Energy Security

Pending legislation would penalize scores of oil and gas companies now producing energy for America in the Gulf of Mexico and make it easier for foreign governments to control future offshore oil and gas production.

The "Hinchey Amendment" to the Interior Appropriations bill approved by the House would ban companies that hold deepwater leases issued by the government in 1998 and 1999 from bidding on Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) leases in 2007.

The Hinchey Amendment will hurt OCS production and American jobs.

Virtually every company, large and small, engaged in the Gulf of Mexico OCS—the core of this country's deepwater experience and expertise—would be affected. Quite possibly, the only bidders likely to show up at the next lease sale would be companies with little experience and giant national oil companies owned by foreign governments. The upshot? Less U.S. production, fewer American jobs, and increased reliance on foreign sources.

The U.S. Treasury will take a beating, as will every American.

Federal revenues from OCS production provide the second-largest revenue source to the U.S. Treasury. Limiting competition in the bidding for oil and gas leases most likely would lower the amount of money the Treasury receives from OCS bonus bids.

Deepwater energy production has been a huge success for the United States.

Deepwater production of natural gas has increased more than 400 percent and oil production has grown nearly as much since 1995. Total offshore production has increased from 980,000 to 1.5 million barrels a day, and deepwater exploration and production has been a success for the American workforce, too, creating tens of thousands of jobs.

Congress should reject the Hinchey Amendment. At a time when America needs all the production it can get from its accessible oil and gas resources, it should be encouraging, not discouraging, investment from the broadest, most technically sophisticated group of companies.

The Hinchey Amendment is bad government, bad energy policy, and bad for consumers.

National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) - U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Alliance for Energy and Economic Growth - Consumer Alliance for Energy Security (CAES)
Agriculture Energy Alliance - American Petroleum Institute (API)
Domestic Petroleum Council (DPC) - Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA)
National Ocean Industries Association (NOIA) - U.S. Oil and Gas Association

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No Posthumous Victory for Zarqawi

On Wednesday, June 7, U.S. military forces, in President Bush's words, "delivered justice to the most wanted terrorist in Iraq," Abu Musab al Zarqawi.

Before considering the possible implications for the war in Iraq and the global struggle against terror, we should pause to celebrate so striking an instance of injustice avenged, and justice vindicated. The unjust—even the barbarically unjust—prevail all too often in this world. It is good for civilized people to see, as Marshall Wittmann put it, that "evil has suffered a setback." In the blunt words of Paul Bigley of the United Kingdom, whose brother Ken was captured and beheaded by Zarqawi, the terrorist "deserved what he got and may he rot in hell."

One might also pause to point out that if we had followed the advice of those who want to pull out from Iraq, Abu Musab al Zarqawi would today be alive and well, and triumphant.

What are the implications for the war in Iraq? That depends on some factors that we can't yet know with any confidence—the resilience of al Qaeda's leadership in Iraq, for one thing, and the true sentiment among the Sunnis of Iraq. But it also depends on what we do. Do we take advantage of this opportunity politically and militarily? Do we pursue the enemy aggressively now when it may be rattled and divided? Or do we do look on this as an excuse to begin to get out—as John Kerry and many others are already advocating? If we do the latter, we will give Zarqawi a victory in death that he could not achieve in life.

What needs to be done now seems clear: a renewed offensive to wipe out what remains of Zarqawi's organization and to defeat the insurgency. We highly recommend the strategy laid out three weeks ago in these pages by Frederick W. Kagan (see "A Plan for Victory in Iraq," May 29) for a comprehensive execution of the clear/hold/build approach in the Euphrates Valley, to be accomplished by Iraqi and U.S. forces working together—something that cannot be accomplished if we draw down U.S. forces. Some counterinsurgency experts would put a priority on sending additional troops to establish order in Baghdad.

But whatever operational choices are made, now is the time to take our best shot at really improving the situation on the ground in Iraq. If this requires 90 percent of the president's time, if it requires stressing the Pentagon and shaking up business as usual elsewhere in the administration—so be it. There is no other successful path forward for the Bush administration than victory in Iraq.

It is also the time to revisit the case for the war. Zarqawi is a perfect reminder of why we had to fight in Iraq. Would we be safer if he were living there, under Saddam's protection, securely planning attacks around the world and working on his chemical and biological weapons projects? Zarqawi's life and death remind us that we are engaged in a global struggle. When he died, Palestinian foreign minister Mahmoud al-Zahar, a leader of Hamas, linked the "resistance" in Iraq to that against Israel, deploring what he termed the "assassination" of Zarqawi. As Saul Singer noted in the *Jerusalem Post*, we are "witnessing the seamlessness of jihad. Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, and al Qaeda come from different sides of the Sunni-Shiite divide, but they agree on the need to wage jihad against the West, particularly Israel and the United States. The death of Zarqawi saddens all of them, just as it causes encouragement for free peoples everywhere."

Zarqawi was a cunning and effective leader of the forces of jihadist terror. His brutality against civilians—Shiites mostly, but also Sunnis who wanted to work to create a new Iraq—helped push Iraq dangerously close to a sectarian civil war and ethnic cleansing, and gravely endangered Iraq's brave experiment in democratic federalism and freedom. But he did not succeed, though the threat he helped create is very much with us.

Al Qaeda's top priority remains what it was in Ayman al-Zawahiri's letter to Zarqawi last July: "Expel the Americans from Iraq." To which, surely, Americans must respond: No posthumous victories for Zarqawi.

—*William Kristol*

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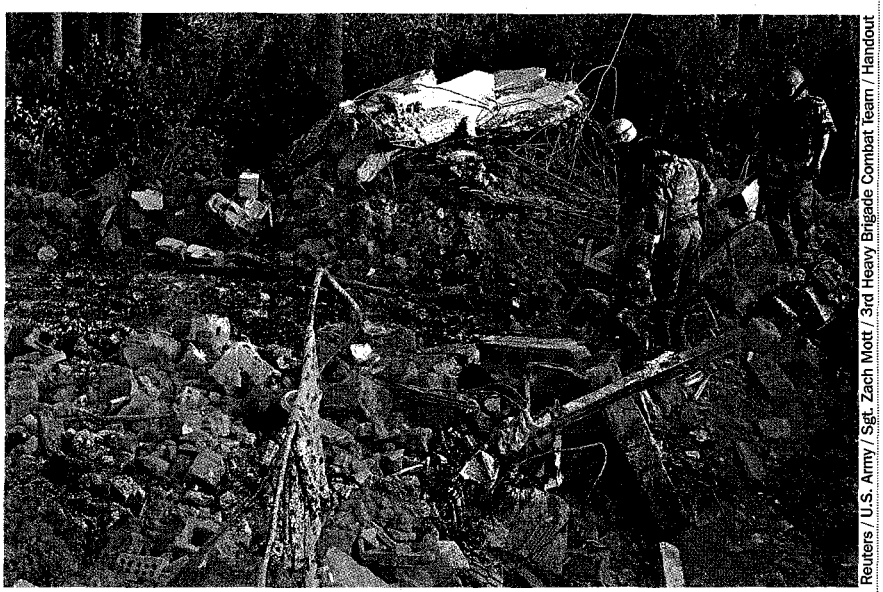
Now for the Bad News . . .

Zarqawi is dead, but the damage he did remains.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT



Reuters / U.S. Army / Sgt. Zach Mott / 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team / Handout

Zarqawi was here: the remains of his "safe house" in Hibhib, June 8

ABU MUSAB AL ZARQAWI is among the least interesting Islamic terrorists since modern Islamic terrorism took shape in Iran and Egypt in the 1950s and '60s. Compared with Osama bin Laden, with his elegant prose, his appreciation for redolent historical Muslim narrative, his seemingly conscious imitation of the Prophet Muhammad, and his refined, almost feminine movements, Zarqawi was Islamist trailer trash, a crude man whose love of violence was unvarnished, organic, perhaps perversely sexual. But Zarqawi was a man of his age: He is a big red dot on the graph charting the Islamic world's moral free fall since modernity began battering traditional Muslim ethics, with ever-increasing effectiveness after World War One.

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It is by no means clear that Zarqawi is near the bottom of this plunge. His joy in massacring infidels—along with all the Muslims the extremists deem apostates—could even become the defining feature of bin Ladenism in the future. Zarqawi's death is a cause for jubilation, especially among Iraq's Shiites, whom he zealously slaughtered. No single man did more to bring on the sectarian strife that is crippling Iraq. If the Shiites give up on the idea of Iraqi brotherhood—which grows ever more likely as half-hearted, undermanned American counterinsurgency strategies continue to fail—and grind the Sunni Arab community into dust, possibly provoking a vicious duel among Sunnis and Shiites across the region, Zarqawi can posthumously and proudly take credit.

Zarqawi was tailor-made for post-Saddam Iraq: a barbaric, very modern Sunni fundamentalist in a society pulverized and militarized by Saddam Hussein. Through oppression and support, Saddam had energized Sunni militancy. Starting in the late 1980s, the Butcher of Baghdad became one of the great mosque builders of Islamic history, and under his domes, Islamic fundamentalists increasingly gathered. Long before Saddam fell, a reinvigorated Sunni Islamic identity was replacing the desiccated, secular Baath party as a, if not the, lodestone of the Sunni community. Always looking outward toward the larger Sunni Arab world (and away from the Shiite Arabs and Sunni Kurds, who comprise about 80 percent of Iraq's population), Iraq's Sunni Arabs were playing catch-up with their foreign brethren, who had already downgraded, if not buried, secular Arab nationalism as an inspiring ideology and given birth to bin Ladenism.

Zarqawi lasted as long as he did in Iraq because he had many sympathizers, probably even among those who were revolted by his gruesome tactics, often aimed at Shiite women and children. Zarqawi and his men were regularly, so it is said, obliged to move their headquarters and areas of operation because of Iraqi Sunni resistance to his methods and his overbearing ways. This may well be true. But Iraq's Sunni insurgents could have easily killed him and his foreign and Iraqi jihadist allies. Their numbers and means dwarfed his. They could have betrayed him long ago, to either his American or his Iraqi enemies. Sunni Arab Iraq is a region of villages, towns, and cities surrounded by great swaths of desert where city kids, like Zarqawi and his foreign holy warriors, cannot sustain themselves. (Important rule about modern Islamic holy warriors: They are urbanites who know not camels.)

The Sunni will to power is deep-rooted and ferociously strong in Iraq. Underestimating this force and failing to confront it head on early in the occupation remains perhaps the single greatest analytical error of the U.S. military, the Central Intelli-

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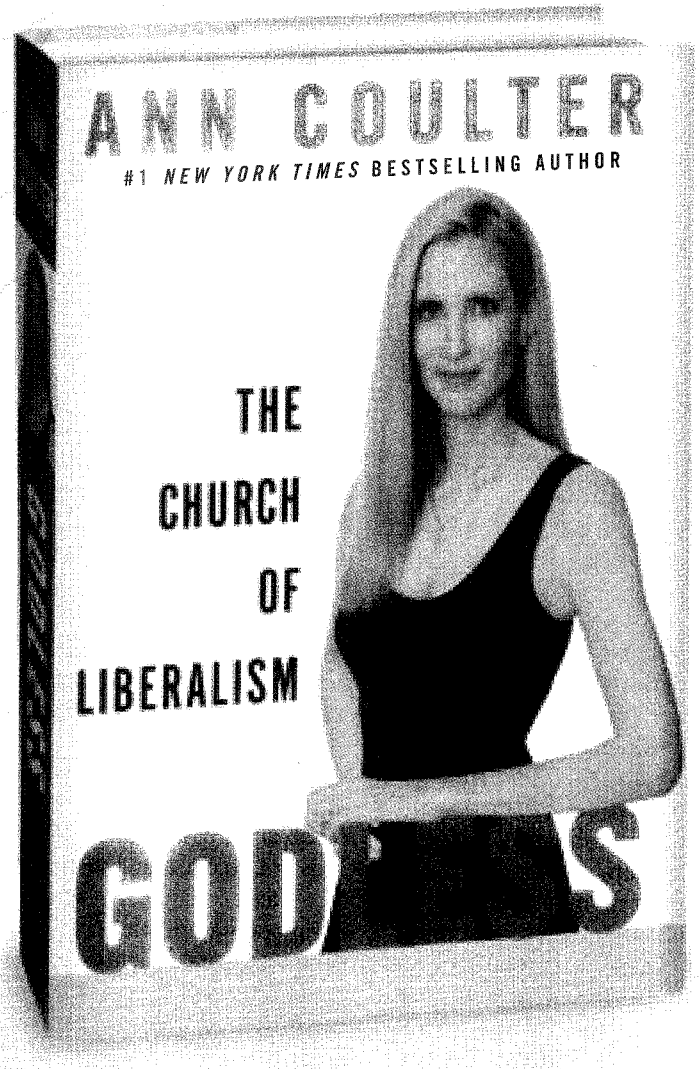
#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

ANN COULTER

On the seventh day God rested—and liberals schemed



In the gospel according to Ann, liberalism is finally exposed for what it is—a godless religion with its own churches (government schools, where prayer is banned but condoms are free), its own commandments ("Thou shalt not punish the perp"), its own holy writ (*Roe v. Wade*), and its own creation myth (Darwinian evolution). But now Ann Coulter is fighting back.
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gence Agency, and the Coalition Provisional Authority under Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. It distorts and has so far defined the ethics of the Iraqi Sunnis as a community.

Their belief in Sunni supremacy has made mincemeat of those Americans and secularized Iraqis who were certain that Iraqis thought of themselves as Iraqis first, without reference to sectarian loyalties. Sunni hubris has made compromises with the Kurdish and especially the Arab Shiite communities extraordinarily difficult. Whether it be dividing oil wealth, assigning senior positions in government, or striking the balance between purging and tolerating the former Baathists, Iraq's Sunnis could surely have cut a better deal without the Sunni insurgency. More than any other factor, the insurgency has converted Iraq's traditional Shiite clergy from hostility to federalism in Iraq to neutrality or even sympathy. Zarqawi understood the dynamic here and did all that he could to ensure that sectarian sensitivities were inflamed after Saddam's fall.

It would be comforting to believe that Zarqawi's atrocities have made the Iraqi Sunnis more reflective. The Jordanian holy warrior forced them to look into the abyss. Certainly, killing Zarqawi is both a tactical and philosophical triumph. Contrary to much left-wing mythology, there is not an endless supply of operational talent in third-world "liberation" movements, be they religiously or secularly based. Chop the head off military organizations, even when they are fairly ragtag, and you can damage them severely, perhaps mortally. The ongoing political process in Iraq, which is drawing in more Sunnis, may have had something to do with Zarqawi's death.

His demise will give Iraqi Sunnis a moment to pause, reflect, and perhaps helpfully rewrite their own history. It would be too much to ask for the leaders of this community to confess the extent to which they contributed to the Zarqawi phenomenon in Iraq; certainly the surrounding Arab Sunni world seems quite willing to accept that decent men and women should experience *frissons* whenever bin Laden launches lethal attacks on the United States.

Few Sunni Arab intellectuals have responded with joy to the news of Zarqawi's death. Many seem uncomfortable with the tactics Zarqawi used (so, too, it appears, were bin Laden and his Egyptian second, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the tactically sensitive moral conscience of al Qaeda). Far fewer appear to be uncomfortable with Zarqawi's overall objective—humbling the Americans, the Shiites, and the Kurds. We will see in the coming weeks whether a serious, critical discussion of Zarqawi's barbaric treatment of the Shiites develops and who abstains from calling him a martyr.

If the Iraqi Arab Sunnis can stop speaking sympathetically of foreign jihadists, then they might be able to begin to question the ethic of martyrdom that fuels their insurgency against the new order in Iraq. If they can stop using the specter of violence as a negotiating strategy, then they might even be able to abort the growing Shiite violence against them before it consumes the country, destroying the clerically backed effort to create a functioning democracy. This may already be impossible, now that Shiite militias are terrifying the Sunni community. Again, Zarqawi knew what he was doing: Reconciliation would be brutally difficult once the Shiites started doing to Sunnis what the Baathists and the Sunni insurgents and holy warriors had been doing to the Shiites for years.

The dimensions of Zarqawi's possible success are thus enormous—greater than what bin Laden accomplished on September 11. Zarqawi was the right man, with the right tactics, at the right moment. In all probability, he would not have mattered if the United States had actually occupied the Sunni Triangle after the deposing of Saddam Hussein, thereby giving the fallen Sunni Arab community a chance to breathe before they became sentimentally and physically enmeshed by the homegrown insurgency and imported holy war.

But Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld chose not to send more troops to Iraq after the fall of Saddam, even after it became blindingly obvious that the insurgents, not the Americans, controlled the roads throughout the Sunni Triangle. General John Abizaid, the commander of American forces in the Middle East, married Rumsfeld's mania for new-age warfare and his lack of interest in post-Saddam Iraqi society with a very new-age, "light footprint" approach to counterinsurgency.

As this thinking has it, American forces, if deployed in large numbers, are more likely to provoke trouble than secure the peace. We are, as General Abizaid likes to say, "antibodies" in the Muslim Middle East. This is an odd position to hold after three years of ever-worsening insurgency—especially when violence has dropped in Iraq every time the Bush administration has increased U.S. troop levels for a national election. It's an odd position to hold after the victory in Tal Afar, where the American command saturated the town with U.S. troops, and the freed Sunni Arab residents were thankful.

It may well be that the manner of Zarqawi's death will send the wrong signal to the U.S. military, which seems determined to continue its "intelligence-driven" counterinsurgency. Good intelligence was followed by laser-guided munitions—just the kind of action that warms Secretary Rumsfeld's heart. But neither we nor the Iraqis are going to find salvation through good intelligence and smart bombs.

If we continue on this "easy" path, we will only guarantee that Abu Musab al Zarqawi's name will endure. Odds are decent that a historian looking back on our sojourn in Mesopotamia and the Iraqis' valiant effort to create a democracy on the ruins of Saddam's totalitarianism will find on our epitaph some tribute to Zarqawi, our monument no doubt safely inside the Green Zone, far from the carnage that this most savage of terrorists fathered. ♦

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Don't Bank on China

A flawed audit, or all too accurate?

BY GARY SCHMITT & JARED FEIGER

EARLY LAST MONTH, the accounting firm of Ernst and Young released a report concluding that the "nonperforming" loans of China's banks totaled $911 billion (40 percent of China's GDP)—a figure that far exceeds the Chinese government's own estimate of $164 billion. Beijing's response to the report was not subtle: "The report not only seriously distorts the actual assets quality of the Chinese banking sector," but "its conclusions are absurd and incomprehensible." Ernst and Young withdrew the report the next day, citing fundamental errors in the analysis.

But was the report really that flawed? Or was the firm's report more right than wrong, and retracted only because doing business in China these days requires pulling one's punches?

Certainly, Ernst and Young's position as auditor for the state-owned Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, the country's largest bank, would give it insight into China's banking problems—and also the incentive to think twice about making the Chinese government angry. The report's timing could not have been worse, as several Chinese banks are gearing up this year for initial public offerings on the Hong Kong exchange that should bring in tens of billions of dollars in new capital. (Ernst and Young will earn millions when, as expected, the Industrial and Commercial Bank launches its IPO effort this coming September.) The last thing China's banks wanted to see was a sour report on their great volume of bad loans and their underlying financial condition.

Of course, China's problem with nonperforming loans (NPLs) is not new. In 1999, according to the "official" tally, NPLs accounted for 25 percent of the total amount of money loaned—a huge amount by international banking standards. The pace at which new loans increased was so great that even after the government moved many of the worst loans off the books to "asset management companies"—created expressly to deal with this mounting problem—and infused the banks with hundreds of billions in new capital, the official ratio still remained at 25 percent.

Moreover, NPL totals are expected to rise as a result of a flood of new lending by Chinese banks between 2002 and 2004 and "another credit surge" recently reported in the *Economist*. In the first four months of this year, Chinese banks lent 60 percent of the amount of credit they issued for the whole of 2005. This is bound to give rise to future bad loans.

In fact, the Ernst and Young report was not unique. Very few financial analysts believe China's "official" figure for NPLs. Most think the ratio of bad loans is considerably higher, maybe as high as 50 percent, according to Frank Song, director of Hong Kong University's China Financial Research Center. When suspected NPL figures are combined with prospective NPL estimates, the Ernst and Young report's figure of $900 billion is probably not wildly off the mark. In fact, previous estimates by Standard and Poor's and PricewaterhouseCoopers indicated that Chinese NPLs could very well top $800 billion; and Fitch Ratings has just put the number at close to $700 billion. Like any such assessment, it's possible that the Ernst and Young report was based on assumptions and analysis that could be called into question. But it's just as likely that the report's inconvenient timing was the reason it was retracted.

The reality is that China's leaders simply haven't been that interested in telling banks to stop throwing good money after bad. Loose credit has become a way of life not only for China's bankers but also for its bureaucrats and party officials. China's banks have an immense amount of cash to play with. The savings rate of Chinese citizens is extraordinarily high: Pensions are uncertain and demographic trends indicate that China's aging population of parents and grandparents can increasingly expect less and less help from their children. The largest banks are also state-controlled and have personal and institutional incentives to give loans to state-owned enterprises, which still make up a surprisingly large segment of the Chinese economy and typically bleed money. With party officials and their relatives sitting on corporate bank boards or managing one of the tens of thousands of largely independent local branches, the banks have become the world's largest ATMs for China's political and business elite. Add to this the fact that China's banks have, at best, rudimentary internal audit systems.

So, the question is, will the banks be fixed? Those in China who want it fixed are hoping that, by bringing in Western financial partners, they can raise additional funds and, through a coupling of management techniques, begin to bring better practices to mainland banks. But they are running headlong against a well-established and well-connected system of elite corruption. And to protect that system, the Chinese are only allowing their non-Chinese partners minority ownership positions which, in turn, only give them a limited say over banking practices.

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Moreover, the nearly 170,000 state-owned enterprises being supported by the banks cannot, Beijing believes, be allowed to go out of business. China's leaders are increasingly worried about rising unemployment and the social unrest that might follow. In addition, Beijing rightly suspects that allowing Chinese citizens to place more savings and profits in markets outside of China would result in a run on deposits that the state banks could not survive.

The buildup in domestic liquidity —savings, plus massive foreign investment—has led to an inflated domestic real estate market and massive spending on infrastructure and manufacturing capacity, investments that now account for nearly half of China's economic output. The bubble in real estate may, of course, burst, and it's an open question whether the world's consumers will, against rising protectionist sentiments in industrial nations, continue to support the ever expanding capacity of Chinese manufacturing or, for that matter, buy all its products.

Plenty of analysts have seen these problems and have predicted China's economic downfall for some years now—and it hasn't happened. At least, not yet. The laws of economics may be complex, but they do, in the end, punish those who ignore their most rudimentary precepts.

However, that's the point. Western financial experts keep looking at China as though it simply wants to be another Western-style, economic force. And while undoubtedly some in China do, others don't. The Communist party sees the banks as too important, in allocating resources and ensuring political support, to turn them over to independent actors. As Minxin Pei notes in his fine new book *China's Trapped Transition*, "Few authoritarian regimes can rely on coercion to maintain power. Most autocracies mix coercion with patronage to secure support from key constituencies, such as the bureaucracy, the military, and business groups."

China is no different, and its banks remain a critical element in the regime's strategy for self-preservation. ♦

Their Man in Baghdad

What Zarqawi—and al Qaeda—were up to before the Iraq war. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

THE LAST QUESTION TO General Bill Caldwell at his briefing last Thursday on the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi came from *New York Times* reporter Richard Oppel, who wanted to know about Abu al-Masri, an Egyptian whom many expect to replace Zarqawi as the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq.

Said Caldwell: "Yeah, al Masri, Egyptian Arab. He's not an Iraqi. Born and raised in Egypt. He was trained in Afghanistan, went through his training there. We know he has been involved with IEDs and making here in Iraq. Probably came here around 2002 into Iraq, probably actually helped establish maybe the first al Qaeda cell that existed in the Baghdad area."

Huh? Doesn't Caldwell understand that there were no al Qaeda terrorists in Iraq before the U.S. invasion of March 2003? Everyone knows that terrorists flocked to Iraq only after the war began.

Reading the coverage of Zarqawi's death in the mainstream press one can understand why that myth persists. Many journalists either don't know or choose not to report the fact that Zarqawi was in Baghdad with two dozen al Qaeda associates nearly a year before the war.

It is a fact not seriously in dispute: Colin Powell cited it in his presentation at the United Nations before the war; the Senate Intelligence Committee confirmed it in its bipartisan review of Iraq war intelligence; General Tommy Franks noted in his book about the Iraq war that Zarqawi "had received medical treatment in Baghdad"; and the Jordanian government provided detailed information on Zarqawi's whereabouts to the Iraqi regime in June 2002, as Amman has since acknowledged.

Why, then, in its 35-point bulleted list of "Key Events in the Life of al-Zarqawi," did the *New York Times* fail to include the terrorist leader's time in Baghdad? And why, in his reflections on Zarqawi in *Newsweek*, did reporter Christopher Dickey mention that the Jordanian terrorist linked up "with a group of radical Islamists in the rough mountains of the Kurdish north, outside Saddam's control" but say nothing about his time in Saddam's Baghdad?

A *Times* news account by its superb Baghdad bureau chief, John Burns, noted Caldwell's answer to Oppel. But many news stories simply left out the fact that Zarqawi and his associates were operating openly in Baathist Iraq for months before the U.S. invasion in March 2003. Others went further. Associated Press writer Patrick Quinn suggested that Bush administration claims that Zarqawi was a link between Iraq and al Qaeda were deceptive.

"The myth-building around al Zarqawi began even before the war started in March 2003," he wrote. "A month earlier, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell told the U.N. Security Council that al Zarqawi's presence in Iraq was proof of Saddam Hussein's links to al Qaeda.

"That claim was later debunked by U.S. intelligence officials."

That's wrong. Not only was the claim never "debunked," it was confirmed by the Senate Intelligence

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Committee's July 2004 review of pre-Iraq war intelligence. On February 5, 2003, Powell told the Security Council that the United States was concerned about "the sinister nexus between Iraq and the al Qaeda terrorist network, a nexus that combines classic terrorist organizations and modern methods of murder. Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Musab al Zarqawi, an associate and collaborator of Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda lieutenants."

Powell described Zarqawi's training in Afghanistan, his experience working with chemical weapons, and a chemical weapons facility Zarqawi set up in northern Iraq.

Powell continued:

> those helping to run this camp are Zarqawi lieutenants operating in northern Kurdish areas outside Saddam Hussein's controlled Iraq.
>
> But Baghdad has an agent in the most senior levels of the radical organization, Ansar al-Islam, that controls this corner of Iraq. In 2000 this agent offered al Qaeda safe haven in the region. After we swept al Qaeda from Afghanistan, some of its members accepted this safe haven. They remain there today.
>
> Zarqawi's activities are not confined to this small corner of northeast Iraq. He traveled to Baghdad in May 2002 for medical treatment, staying in the capital of Iraq for two months while he recuperated to fight another day.
>
> During this stay, nearly two dozen extremists converged on Baghdad and established a base of operations there. These al Qaeda affiliates, based in Baghdad, now coordinate the movement of people, money and supplies into and throughout Iraq for his network, and they've now been operating freely in the capital for more than eight months.
>
> Iraqi officials deny accusations of ties with al Qaeda. These denials are simply not credible. Last year an al Qaeda associate bragged that the situation in Iraq was, quote, "good," that Baghdad could be transited quickly.
>
> We know these affiliates are connected to Zarqawi because they remain even today in regular contact with his direct subordinates, including the poison cell plotters, and they are involved in moving more than money and materiel.

Powell noted that Zarqawi associates captured after the assassination of U.S. AID employee Laurence Foley, in Jordan, said they received arms from Zarqawi. And much of that operation was planned from Zarqawi's safe haven in regime-controlled Iraq.

The Senate Intelligence Committee found that "the information provided by the Central Intelligence Agency for the terrorism portion of Secretary Powell's speech was carefully vetted by both terrorism and region analysts" and that "none of the portrayals of the intelligence reporting included in Secretary Powell's speech differed in any significant way from earlier assessments published by the Central Intelligence Agency."

In fact, the CIA had known of Zarqawi's relationship with Iraqi Intelligence since March 2002, when al Qaeda operations chief Abu Zubaydah volunteered that information to interrogators in a debriefing upon his capture. Zubaydah said in the interview that Osama bin Laden opposed a "formal alliance" with Saddam Hussein, though he conceded that he would not necessarily know if such a relationship existed. In that same debriefing, however, Zubaydah told the Americans that Zarqawi had good relations with Iraqi Intelligence.

Zubaydah would know that. Zubaydah had known the Jordanian terror leader for years, and together they had plotted to bomb the Radisson Hotel in Amman, Jordan, popular with Americans, on the millennium. They were both later tried in absentia for the thwarted attack.

Zarqawi ran a terrorist training camp in Herat, Afghanistan, before moving to Iraq after the U.S. invasion. Operatives from Jordan's intelligence service, the GID, followed him. The Senate Intelligence Committee, referring to the Jordanians as a "foreign government service," discussed these events in its July 2004 report. "The Iraqi regime was, at a minimum, aware of al Zarqawi's presence in Baghdad in 2002 because a foreign government service passed [redacted] information regarding his whereabouts to Iraqi authorities in June 2002." The Senate report confirmed Powell's claims that Zarqawi was operating in regime-controlled Iraq. "Al Zarqawi and his network were operating both in Baghdad and in the Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq."

More recently, a "Jordanian security official" spoke to the *Washington Post*. "There is proof that he was in Iraq during that time," the official said. "We sent many memos to Iraq during this time, asking them to identify his position, where he was, how he got weapons, how he smuggled them across the border."

The *Post* account continues:

> Hussein's government never responded, according to the official, who added that documents recovered after its overthrow in 2003 show that Iraqi agents did detain some Zarqawi operatives but released them after questioning. Furthermore, the Iraqis warned the Zarqawi operatives that the Jordanians knew where they were, he said. After he recovered from his injuries, Zarqawi continued to cross borders in the region frequently, using disguises and fake passports to stay one step ahead of the Jordanians.

Why would the Iraqis detain Zarqawi associates only to release them with a warning that the Jordanians were on their trail? According to former and current U.S. military officials, the foreign jihadists were swept up in a broader crackdown on Iraqi religious extremists. But that was not the end of the story. The foreigners were soon released following a directive issued by the office of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. (Most leaks to the media about the detentions apparently omitted that interesting fact.)

The death of the savage fanatic Zarqawi reminds us why we are fighting. A look back at his career after Afghanistan reminds us why we are fighting in Iraq. ♦

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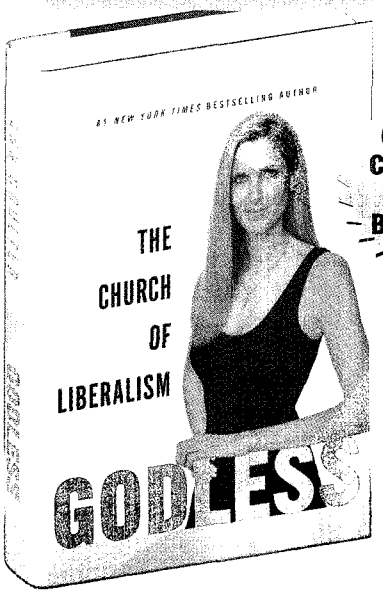

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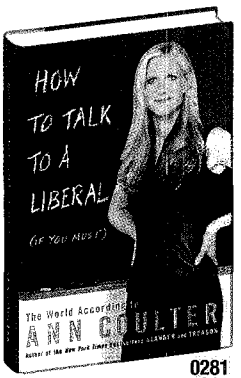

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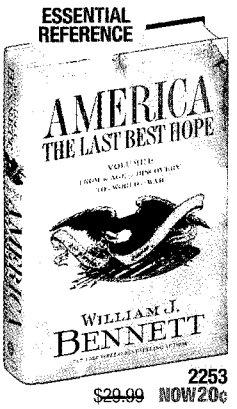

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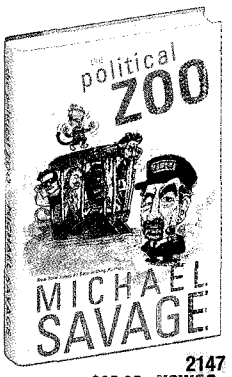

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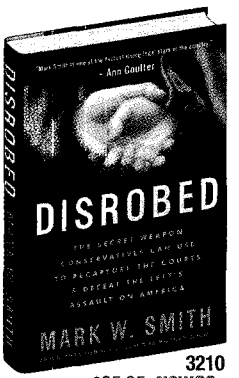

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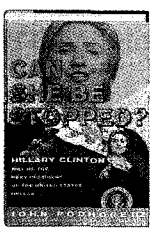

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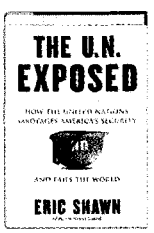

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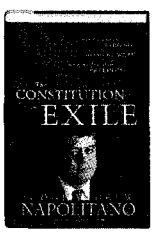

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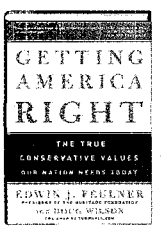

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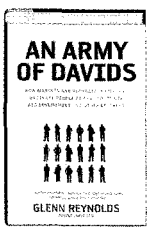

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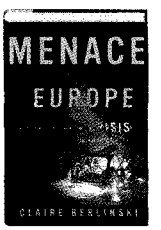

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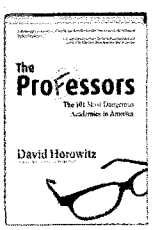

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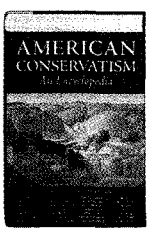

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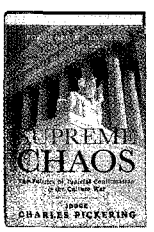

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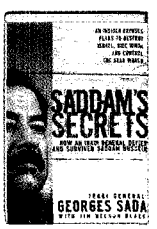

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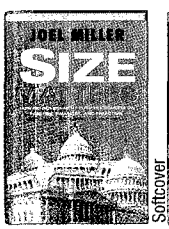

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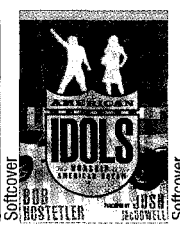

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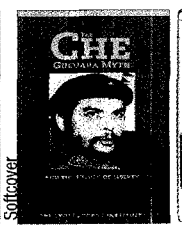

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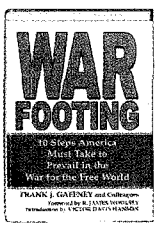

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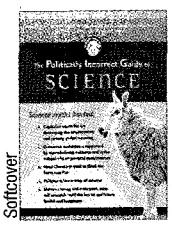

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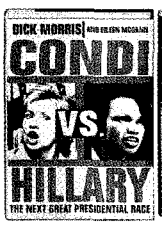

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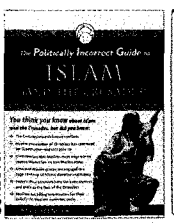

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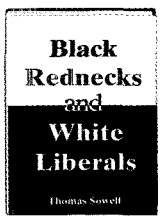

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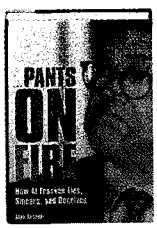

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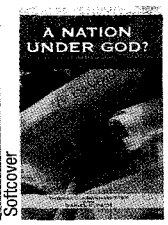

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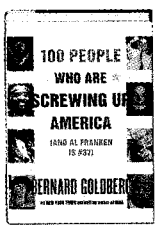

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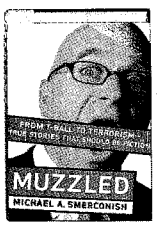

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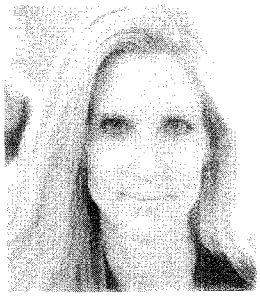

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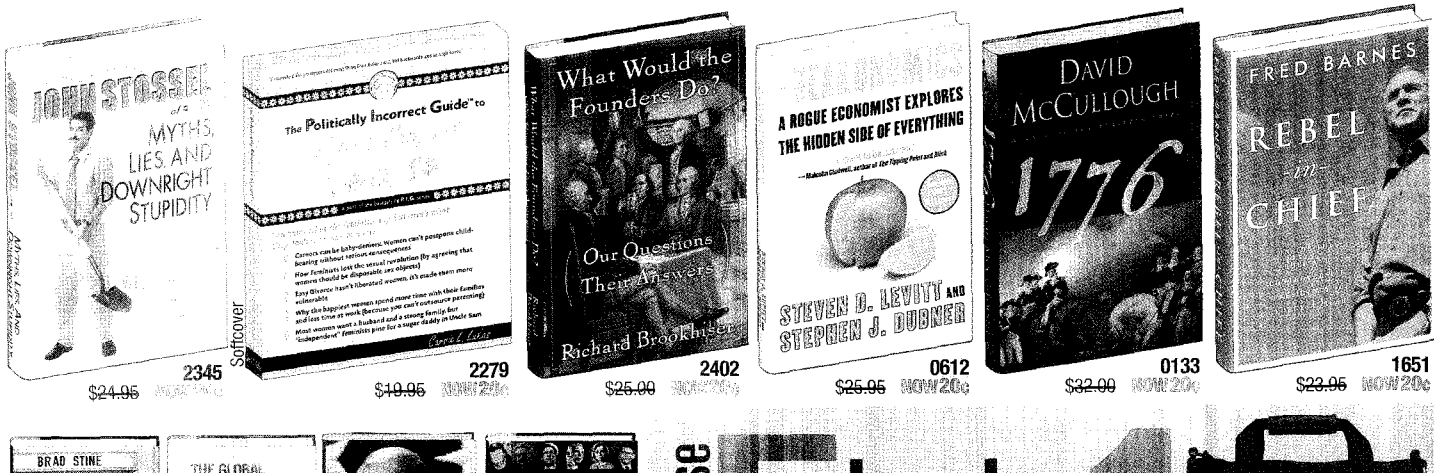

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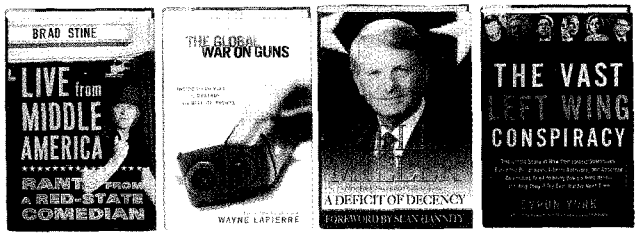

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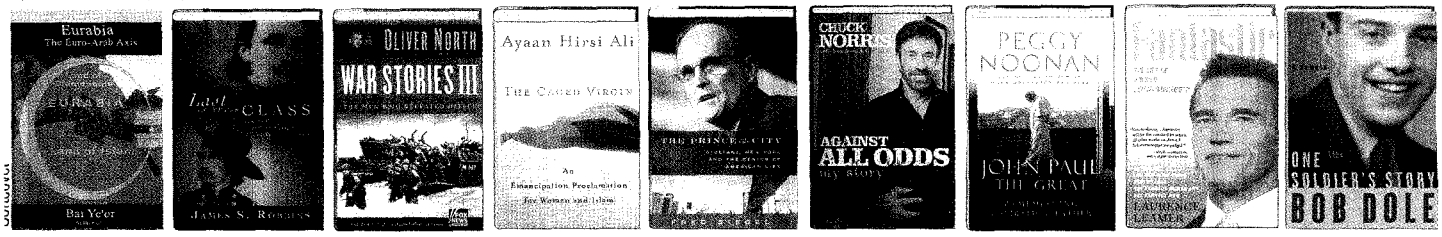

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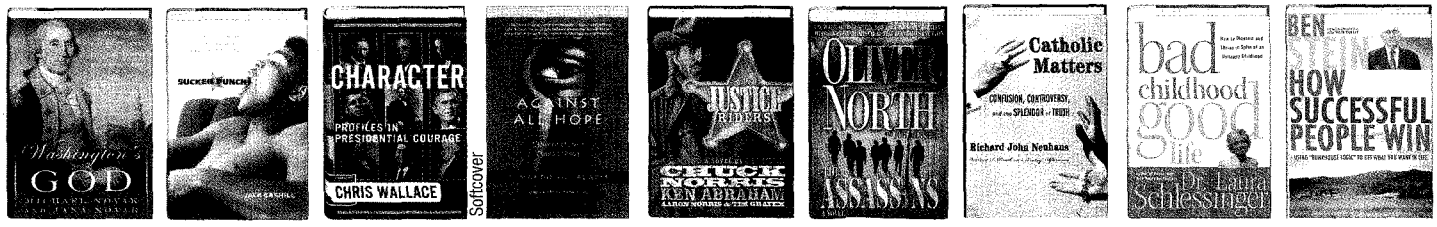

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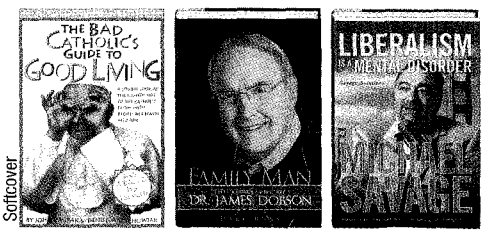

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Domain Game

The "takings clause" fight moves to the Ohio Supreme Court. BY DUNCAN CURRIE

Norwood, Ohio

STANDING on the corner of Atlantic Avenue and Edwards Road in Norwood, a suburb of Cincinnati, I'm gazing at the remains of a once-crowded middle-class neighborhood. It is also the site of the first major battle over eminent domain since the Supreme Court's notorious *Kelo* ruling. What is now largely a grassy field used to contain more than 70 different buildings, many of them family homes. Three of the properties are still intact—at least until the Ohio State Supreme Court decides the consolidated cases of *Norwood* v. *Horney*, *Norwood* v. *Gamble*, and *Norwood* v. *Burton*, which could happen any week now.

Directly across Edmondson Road from the fenced-in construction site are the sprawling Rookwood Commons and Rookwood Pavilion shopping centers with the familiar totems of bourgeois suburbia: Eddie Bauer, the Gap, Starbucks, and Coldwater Creek. By far the tallest structure in Rookwood mall is the Northwestern Mutual building, which includes the headquarters of Anderson Real Estate. The company is worth an estimated $500 million. It controls both Rookwood Commons and Rookwood Pavilion. Several years ago, founder and CEO Jeffrey Anderson moved to expand his commercial empire across Edmondson Road. The $125 million project, called Rookwood Exchange, included office space, luxury condos, retail stores, and more. But building it meant clearing out dozens of Norwood families. Thus began this saga of demolition, litigation, and frustration.

Joe Horney owns—or used to own—one of the three houses still standing in the Rookwood project site, a house he rented to two tenants. He recalls the September 2002 meeting at which the developers laid out their plan. They offered a compensation package to each property owner. But even then, Horney claims, the whiff of eminent domain action was in the air. "I stood up at that meeting, and I said, 'What you're doing is wrong.'"

Horney, 37, felt the offer was below fair market value, but, he insists, it wasn't really about the money. It was a matter of principle. And Horney just didn't want to sell. This meant little to the Norwood city council, which has been battling periodic fiscal emergencies at least since 1987, when the closing of a GM plant cost the city some 4,000 jobs and 35 percent of its tax base (according to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*). Such budget woes gave Norwood a powerful incentive to favor the economic development idea put forth by Rookwood Partners. Indeed, Norwood let the developer bankroll an "urban renewal" study of the Edwards Road neighborhood, on which basis the city declared the area "blighted" and "deteriorating."

By the city's definitions, however, huge swaths of the United States could easily be considered "blighted" or "deteriorating." The Rookwood-funded study identified a hodgepodge of minor maladies affecting the neighborhood: light pollution (from the nearby Rookwood mall), sidewalk cracks, weeds, dead-end streets (an alleged hazard for fire trucks), its proximity to the interstate highway, and, most bizarrely, the "diversity of ownership" in the community (i.e., there were too many small property owners). But not a single property was tax delinquent. None was dilapidated. Nor did the area have a crime problem—quite the opposite. As one local merchant told me, the Edwards Road location borders on some of the safest neighborhoods in Cincinnati.

If you stroll farther down Edwards Road, just a few blocks past the project site, you will find a stretch of retail businesses, including a Thai restaurant, a wine store, a tailor, hair salons, a dental office, a fish market, sports bars, a piano store, an antiques store, an electronics store, a cat clinic, and other shops. The adjacent streets—part of an old Cincinnati neighborhood called Oakley—are lined by leafy trees and modest to hefty middle-class homes, most of which have backyards, sizable porches, and well-kept front lawns. But, again, if you apply the Norwood city council criteria, you could conceivably declare this vicinity "blighted" and "deteriorating" as well.

After Norwood paved the way for redevelopment of the Rookwood Exchange lot, an angry band of property owners teamed up with the Institute for Justice, a libertarian law firm that works pro bono, to challenge the finding. Most of the owners eventually caved, however, and accepted the developer's offer. One family who did not was the Gambles, a couple in their late 60s, who had lived at 2641 Atlantic Avenue for over three decades. "The developer was offering good money," admits Joy Gamble. Neighbors began pressuring each other to sell. Pretty soon, there were only five sets of property owners still resisting.

In June 2004, a Hamilton County court ruled that the neighborhood was, in fact, "deteriorating," but not actually "blighted." The court held that the five remaining properties could be seized via eminent domain to spur private commercial development. Several months later, while that decision was being appealed, another county court ruled that Rookwood Partners was free to raze the property of Joe Horney.

"That is really a radical interpretation of the law," laughs Scott Bullock, an Institute for Justice lawyer working with the appellant group. Even if Horney eventually won his challenge, what good would it do? "You can get your

Duncan Currie is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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property back—but your home is gone!" In January 2005, the county court made a similar ruling against the Gambles: Their home could also be torn down during the appeals process. Luckily for Horney and the Gambles, the Ohio State Supreme Court enjoined Rookwood from bulldozing their properties.

Today, just three sets of property owners are left fighting the Norwood city council. Some of their former neighbors think what they're doing is just plain silly. "Joe Horney and the other holdouts are fools for not taking the money," James Lee Patton told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in April. "No property is worth holding on to for the sums the developer was offering." An *Enquirer* analysis of real estate records concluded that "on average" the vast majority of property owners who sold to Rookwood "received more than double the fair market value most recently estimated by the Hamilton County Auditor."

None of which surprises Joy Gamble. "When people are faced with principle versus money, 99 percent of them will take the money." The principle she refers to is this: Cities should not be abusing the "takings clause"—the passage in the Fifth Amendment that says seizure of private property is only warranted "for public use" and with "just compensation"—to enrich private developers and boost city revenues. But that is exactly what has been happening across the country for decades.

The problem received little public notice until last June, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Kelo* v. *New London* that confiscating private property to promote economic development was indeed constitutional. The majority opinion, penned by Justice John Paul Stevens, did however encourage states to take action if they wanted to protect property rights. Stevens wrote, "The necessity and wisdom of using eminent domain to promote economic development are certainly matters of legitimate public debate."

Since *Kelo* came down, Ohio has placed a moratorium—effective until December 31—on cities' deploying eminent domain in an "unblighted area" when the primary purpose is private economic development. But it was not retroactive; it merely applied to *new* eminent domain takings. The state has also commissioned a task force to study the matter. The Ohio High Court must now resolve whether Norwood went too far in the Rookwood case—and whether it is legal to raze a piece of property while the owner is waging an appeals battle through the courts. Joe Horney and the Gambles are not the only ones waiting anxiously for the decision. ♦

The Coming Immigration Deal

Congress will follow the polls.

BY JEFFREY BELL

THE POLITICS OF IMMIGRATION reform changed on March 27. That's the day the Senate Judiciary Committee approved (in a vote of 12-6) an immigration reform bill that included increased border security and law enforcement, a guest-worker program, and a path to legalization for the roughly 12 million illegals who live in the United States.

Almost immediately, polling on the immigration issue shifted toward the pro-immigrant side. Specifically, when voters were asked whether they favor "enforcement only" (like the bill passed by the House in late 2005), a guest-worker program only, or a bill similar to the Senate bill that embodied both these elements and legalization, they overwhelmingly favored the Senate approach. This polling pattern has not changed significantly in the weeks since late March—weeks that included floor debate and Senate passage (by 62-36) of the Martinez-Hagel bill, which resembles the Judiciary bill reported to the floor on March 27.

There is a second way the issue changed that day. It became the dominant domestic policy debate of the 109th Congress and in the nation at large. It's an issue on which virtually every American voter has an opinion. For that reason, it became an issue that Congress will feel great pressure to act on before its term expires.

When the 109th Congress began meeting in early 2005, Social Security reform was picked by many to dominate domestic policy debate. One reason it did not is that, by its nature, fixing Social Security is a postponable issue. The demographic deficits projected for the decades when the baby boom retires have not begun to build up. Since few voters were attracted to the president's proposals for personal accounts and progressive benefit reductions, or to hinted Democratic alternatives that mostly involved higher taxes, the electorate found inaction highly preferable.

None of this is the case regarding immigration. The issue has been building for years, in very visible ways: In our work force, in our schools, on our streets, and in more and more states and regions. It's safe to say that few voters believe immigration has been handled well by elected officials of either party at any level of government—federal, state, or local. Given this background, try to picture the public's reaction to a congressman or senator returning home this fall and announcing that, given all the available alternatives, Congress did the

Jeffrey Bell, a principal of Capital City Partners, has worked since 2001 as a consultant to the National Council of La Raza on immigration reform.

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right thing by doing nothing. Since the public's reaction to such an announcement is not likely to be favorable, or perhaps even printable, it seems likely that this is a picture we will never see. That is, the 109th Congress will ultimately come to agreement on some version of immigration reform.

What, then, are the parameters of public opinion? Though most people at most times in most countries are at the very least nervous about a massive inflow of foreigners, Americans are of all nationalities the least nervous. We have more experience with immigrants than any other nation. Almost all of our voters are descended from immigrants, and most American voters believe most immigrants come for good reasons—to work and to enjoy our higher level of political and economic freedoms.

What voters do not like is an immigration system that increasingly relies on, and winks at, breaking the law. Voters never liked this, but they became especially unfavorable to it after 9/11. They want greater control of our borders, and more enforcement of immigration laws inside our borders.

Political elites, Republican and Democratic alike, often seem to operate on the assumption that voters are either pro-immigrant or pro-enforcement, but not both. In fact, most voters see no contradiction between the two. Nor is there a huge difference between rank-and-file Republicans and rank-and-file Democrats. Solid, but by no means unanimous, majorities in each party favor both immigration—including a path to legalization for those already here—and increased enforcement of immigration laws.

According to Ed Goeas, a pro-immigration pollster who works mainly for conservative Republican candidates, that has been true for many years. Goeas has a special right to his opinion: In polling for the Manhattan Institute, he predicted months in advance that once a comprehensive immigration reform was on the table —which happened on March 27— comprehensive reform would become the most popular policy choice in the electorate.

Another surprising Goeas finding is that Republican primary voters—not activists, but primary voters—are likely to react unfavorably to a candidate who comes across as anti-immigration or as favoring a purely punitive approach toward immigrants. This may account for some GOP primaries in recent years where a front-runner in a race for an open House seat—e.g., State Rep. Carl Isett in Texas 19 in 2003 and State Sen. Rico Oller in California 3 in 2004—go down to an upset defeat following a decision to make anti-immigration the centerpiece of radio and/or TV advertising.

Those races stand out because a decision to make anti-immigrant themes the centerpiece of a GOP primary race was then relatively rare. Today, with immigration having emerged as the central domestic issue in American politics, it will be in play in many more races, with both parties maneuvering for advantage.

In last week's special election in the 50th District of California, for example, GOP restrictionists scored a win with the election of former Rep. Brian Bilbray. What is less well known is that with about a week to go, GOP polling had him behind the Democrats' pro-immigration nominee, Francine Busby, and that a blunder on an immigration-related issue almost certainly turned the election away from her.

Busby told a predominantly Hispanic audience that they didn't need "papers"—in the context, this seemed to mean proof of citizenship—in order to vote for her. In other words, she was not just pro-immigrant, but pro-illegality when it served her electoral interests.

This violates a cardinal rule of the immigration debate: You can be pro-immigrant as long as you are pro-rule of law at the same time. Other immigration advocates (for example, Gov. Gray Davis in the 2003 California recall) have made a similar blunder by favoring the awarding of driver's licenses to immigrants who are here illegally. Arrangements of this kind embody everything about the present immigration regime that voters detest. On top of that, a politician who nominally opposes illegality, but in practice winks at it, comes across as a supreme hypocrite, however well-intentioned he or she may be.

The difference between the politics of a comprehensive solution, and an ad hoc winking at illegality, was

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recently brought home in two elections in Herndon, Virginia. Herndon's local government set up a work center for immigrants (many if not most of them illegal) to come to every morning to get a day's work. The mayor and his allies on the council were pro-immigrant but were ejected from office by local voters. They were seen as building around an existing system of illegality.

Yet in the Virginia gubernatorial election a few short months earlier, Republican nominee Jerry Kilgore, who had run ads in the Washington media market attacking his opponent for a mildly pro-immigration stance, was swamped by the same Herndon voters. The same conservative-leaning voters who disliked the apparent condoning of illegality at their local work center voted against a candidate who verged on making hostility to immigration a central campaign theme.

Conservative politicians from Texas seem to have a leg up in navigating these minefields. Such politicians most emphatically include President Bush and his senior political adviser, Karl Rove. Immigration is not a new issue in Texas, which is at one and the same time the only big state where non-Latino whites are now a minority and that also routinely supports conservatives (it went for Bob Dole in 1996, for example).

Without coming across in any sense as anti-rule of law, Bush has raised his share of the Hispanic vote in every election he has been involved in, first in Texas and more recently the nation as a whole (the only two national exit polls taken in 2004 showed Bush losing the Hispanic vote to John Kerry by 9 percentage points, while Dole lost the Hispanic vote by more than 50 points eight years earlier). It will take all of the Republicans' skills to bring home a comprehensive immigration bill from this Congress, but if they do so the odds are they will be acting in accord with the American vision of immigration and will enable their party to competitively fight elections of the future in a nation increasingly populated by our latest wave of immigrants. ♦

No Terrorist Is an Island

The international connections of the Canadian cell. BY DAN DARLING

As the details of the foiled Canadian terrorist plot continue to emerge, much is still unknown. Fifteen suspects were arrested in the Toronto area on June 2 and 3 in a police sting operation as they attempted to take possession of what they believed to be three tons of ammonium nitrate, roughly triple the amount used in the Oklahoma City bombing. Initially, many media reports said nothing about these suspects—and 2 others already in custody—beyond the fact that all are Canadian residents and most are Canadian citizens. Yet it soon emerged that the 12 adults and 5 teenagers are Muslims of Somali, Egyptian, Jamaican, and Trinidadian origin.

Media reports have named the Peace Tower in the Canadian Parliament, the CN Tower complex, and the Toronto Stock Exchange as possible targets for the plot, but what is reasonably clear is that the participants intended to inflict mass casualties. According to Luc Portelance, assistant operations director of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service, the suspects had "become adherents to a violent ideology inspired by al Qaeda."

Despite all the uncertainties, a number of media outlets and terrorism analysts, taking a cue from Canadian police, rushed to declare the entire affair the work of homegrown terrorists operating independently of any broader network or organization. Typical of this interpretation were the comments of former White House counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke, who told ABC News following the arrests, "This is leaderless terrorism, . . . cells that are not connected to anything. . . . There's nothing in their communications that would indicate this is terrorist communication. The calls are domestic. They're not going back to Afghanistan. And what's probably being said is the equivalent of, 'Let's all get together at Joe's house.'"

Yet there are good reasons to doubt this view.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the Canadian arrests are "part of a continuing, multinational inquiry into suspected terrorist cells in at least seven countries." Far from having completed their investigation, the *Times* reported, "authorities were combing through evidence seized during raids in Canada . . . to look for possible connections between 17 suspects arrested Friday and Saturday and at least 18 other Islamist militants who had been arrested in locations including the United States, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Britain, Denmark, and Sweden."

CanWest News Service reported that "the six-month RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation called Project Osage is one of several overlapping probes that includes an FBI case called Operation Northern Exposure and a British probe known as Operation Mazhar." Further, the newswire noted, "the intricate web of connections between Toronto, London, Atlanta, Sarajevo, Dhaka, and elsewhere illustrates the challenge confronting counterterrorism investigators almost five years after 9/11." According to CanWest, "linking the international probes are online communications, phone calls and in particular videotapes that

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authorities allege show some of the targets the young extremists considered blowing up." While none of this proves an international dimension to the plot, it strongly suggests it.

And there are other hints of international connections. Canadian journalist and columnist Andrew Coyne notes that the father of terror suspect Shareef Abdelhaleen confirmed to the Canadian Press that he once posted bail for one Mohamed Mahjoub, who has been held by Canadian intelligence on the basis of secret evidence since June 2000. According to a CBC News article from September 2005, Mahjoub is accused of being a member of the Vanguards of Conquest—a faction of Egyptian Islamic Jihad, the group led by al Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri. While Mahjoub denies any connection to terrorism, he admits that he met bin Laden in Sudan in the 1990s. Perhaps the link between the Abdelhaleens and Mahjoub is just an amazing coincidence.

Another suggestive bit of information is that the Canadian suspects were in contact with Syed Haris Ahmed and Ehsanul Islam Sadequee. These two men, both American citizens from the Atlanta area, are alleged by the U.S. government to have traveled to Canada in March 2005 to discuss "strategic locations in the United States suitable for a terrorist strike" with three individuals subsequently identified in media reports as being among the Canadian suspects now in custody.

According to the FBI affidavit against Ahmed and Sadequee, the two discussed traveling to Pakistan to attend a terrorist training camp. WAGA-TV reported in April that Ahmed later traveled to Pakistan in an effort to do just that. As for Sadequee, he was arrested in April 2006 in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, and turned over to the FBI, who according to the affidavit found him in possession of a CD-ROM with encrypted files and a map of the Washington area. The affidavit accuses Sadequee of lying about traveling to Bangladesh to visit his aunt. It should be noted that over the last year Bangladesh has been rocked by a wave of violence organized by Islamist groups loyal to the now-incarcerated Sheikh Abdur Rahman, a key signatory of bin Laden's 1998 declaration of war.

The nature of the relationship among the Canadian suspects, their Atlanta counterparts, and any additional accomplices requires further elucidation, as does the nature of any relationship between the younger Abdelhaleen and Mahjoub. And so also does the fact that two of the Canadian suspects, Mohammed Dirie and Yasim Abdi Mohamed, attempted to smuggle weapons and ammunition from the United States to Canada in August 2005 before being arrested by Canadian border police at Fort Erie, near Buffalo.

According to the *Toronto Sun*, documents from the Canadian National Parole Board show that Dirie told Canadian officials he had gone to Buffalo "frequently over a few months," as well as to Ohio, where he claimed that he needed to purchase a gun because a friend had been robbed. The Canadian parole board didn't buy that claim, but neither did it offer any comment on Dirie's account of his travels to the United States. Was Dirie's story true? If so, who did he meet with during these travels and why?

With so many questions unanswered, it is far too soon to rule out connections between the Canadian conspiracy and terrorists abroad. Certainly, much evidence has come to light challenging the view that homegrown terrorism is an entirely insular phenomenon.

Unfortunately, the desire to ignore or downplay international connections between individual terrorist suspects on the one hand and terrorist networks on the other has become increasingly prevalent in public analysis since September 11 and particularly since the rise of the Iraqi insurgency. Today, even a careful observer could easily get the mistaken impression that terror cells are produced by something like spontaneous combustion.

Even more misleading are attempts to nail down a pseudo-legalistic "six degrees of separation" between terrorist organizations and specific attacks carried out by their followers. Thus, many analysts and reporters assert that no connection exists between al Qaeda and either the March 2004 train bombings in Spain or the July 2005 bombings in London. But that is far from incontrovertible. On the contrary, multiple investigations into these attacks by the Spanish and British governments have drawn clear connections between their perpetrators and al Qaeda or its associate groups.

Commentators who deny these connections often claim to be correcting a widespread misconception that all acts of Islamist terrorism are personally ordered by Osama bin Laden. Instead, they seek to highlight the role of extremist ideology in the shadowy world of international terrorism. But while Islamist ideology is indeed a powerful motive for terrorism, it is simply not the case that terrorist cells spring into existence altogether independently. Al Qaeda and allied organizations still play a role in providing strategy and direction as well as funding, training, and propaganda to prospective jihadists.

With regard to the Canadian plotters, if indeed they took their "inspiration" from al Qaeda, we do not yet know how this occurred. Did they read strategy documents posted on the Internet? Respond to calls by al Qaeda leaders to carry out attacks against Canada and Canadian nationals? Receive paramilitary training that some of the suspects appear to have conducted in Washago, Ontario, according to Canadian media reports? Such local training was encouraged by al Qaeda strategist Mustafa Setmariam Nasar prior to his capture last year.

No serious examination of the Canadian plot should minimize the potential foreign connections out of blind adherence to a convenient analytical model. Like all other leads, the considerable evidence suggesting foreign connections should be vigorously pursued. ♦

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Bubba Dubya?

A curiously Clintonian turn in U.S. foreign policy. BY MICHAEL RUBIN

On September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush put the world on notice. "We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." Unanimously, senators and congressmen gave Bush a standing ovation.

Now, faced with falling poll numbers, and wanting the affirmation of the foreign policy elite here and abroad—from the Quai d'Orsay to Auswärtiges Amt and Turtle Bay—the president seems to have reversed course. He still speaks about democracy and the war against terror, but increasingly his administration charts the path of least resistance and paper compromise so dominant during the Clinton years. This may please diplomats, but it does not ensure national security. It's déjà vu all over again in the White House.

Reviving the North Korea Model

On May 31, 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reversed U.S. policy toward Iran. "We are agreed with our European partners on the essential elements of a package containing both the benefits if Iran makes the right choice, and costs if it does not."

Her announcement delighted European diplomats and validated former Clinton administration officials. An April 26 statement signed by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and five European former foreign ministers had advised, "We believe that the Bush administration should pursue a policy it has shunned for many years: attempt to negotiate directly with Iranian leaders about their nuclear program." Sandy Berger, Clinton's second-term national security adviser, applauded the move: "[Rice] has done a very effective job in the last year and a half of consolidating foreign policy back in the State Department." To Albright and Berger, 1990s-style diplomacy, with its emphasis on multilateralism and consensus over substance, is an end in itself.

Precedent gives little ground for optimism. What Bush offered Tehran mirrors what Clinton gave Pyongyang.

In the wake of Rice's announcement, senior U.S. diplomats and European officials speaking on background outlined the proposed carrots and sticks: If Tehran promises to suspend uranium enrichment, sits down, and talks, it will receive light water nuclear reactors. If Tehran refuses to talk, Europe, Russia, and perhaps even China will discuss sanctions at the U.N. Security Council. There is no consensus about what these sanctions would constitute, nor is there a timeline. Just two days after Rice's concession, her Russian counterpart hinted at just how flaccid the proposed sticks were. Speaking in Vienna, Sergei Lavrov commented, "I can say unambiguously that all the agreements from yesterday's meetings rule out in any circumstances the use of military force."

Precedent gives little ground for optimism. What Bush offered Tehran mirrors what Clinton gave Pyongyang. On October 21, 1994, Ambassador Robert L. Gallucci signed the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework. In exchange for a freeze of the Stalinist dictatorship's nuclear program, Washington offered to supply Pyongyang with two light water nuclear reactors and a basket of additional incentives. Clinton explained, "North Korea will freeze and dismantle its nuclear program. South Korea and our allies will be better protected. The entire world will be safer as we slow the spread of nuclear weapons."

But North Korea did not freeze its nuclear program, and the world did not become safer. In 1998, Pyongyang signaled its renewed belligerence when it launched a nuclear-capable Taepodong-1 missile over Japan. It continued to enrich uranium and later withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The Central Intelligence Agency now estimates North Korea has a couple of bombs; the Stalinist state claims to have more. The idea that Clinton's deal was a success is revisionist nonsense. It is a model only for the triumph of appearance over substance. Kim Jong Il played Clinton; Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is playing Bush.

Terror Training Camps

It is not just the actions of the Bush administration that recall the Clinton years, but also the inaction. The Clinton administration knew that Afghanistan played host to terror training camps. The 9/11 Commission detailed the Clinton administration's decision to trust diplomacy. A declassified December 8, 1997, State Department cable detailed high-level talks between Assistant Secretary Karl F. Inderfurth and a Taliban delegation. The Taliban promised to "keep their commitment and not allow Bin Laden and others to use Afghanistan as a base

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for terrorism." The State Department lauded its own success. "We believe our message . . . came through loud and clear." It didn't.

On August 7, 1998, al Qaeda attacked the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Thirteen days later, Clinton ordered a retaliatory missile attack on a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan and on Zhawar Kili, a terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. International reaction was tepid at best. While Prime Minister Tony Blair stood by Clinton, most European allies were lukewarm. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan expressed "concern" and the Kremlin denounced U.S. actions.

Clinton valued international affirmation. The symbolic Tomahawk strike complete, he sought to assuage allies with renewed commitment to international multilateral diplomacy. Both Clinton and the Taliban reverted to business as usual. Sensing weakness, al Qaeda accelerated its training program. In March 2000, I spent three weeks in the Taliban's Afghanistan. In Kabul, shopkeepers described meeting Arabs and Filipinos training for jihad. While the Taliban denied hosting terror training camps, residents near Rishkhor, a camp just a few kilometers from Kabul, spoke of continued activity. Eighteen months later, graduates from Afghan camps like these brought down the World Trade Center.

Today, the location is different, but the White House's desire to turn a blind eye is the same. In the 1990s, Afghanistan was a forgotten backwater; this decade, it is Somalia. Terrorists love a vacuum. On June 5, the Islamic Courts Union, an Islamist group affiliated with al Qaeda, seized Mogadishu, Somalia's capital. Both journalists and policymakers were underwhelmed. Perhaps, some mused, this radical Islamist gang could restore order. Reporting was similarly blasé when the Taliban seized Kabul just under a decade ago.

The Islamic Courts Union and the terrorist threat they pose did not materialize out of thin air; rather, they are a product of Bush administration neglect. Somalis living in Mogadishu speak of terrorist training camps established in the Lower Juba region, along the Kenyan border. According to Somali officials, the camps are not indigenous, but are run by Palestinians and Syrians. Senior U.S. military officials acknowledge the growing al Qaeda presence, but say they are forbidden to intervene. Not only has the Bush administration long nixed U.S. military action against terror training camps but now also forbids the U.S. military from filling the vacuum in still stable regions of the country, such as Somaliland and Puntland.

As the Bush administration wishes the problem away, rich Saudi and Persian Gulf financiers work to consolidate the region as a jihadist base. While Clinton did little to stop the capital flow from Gulf Arab sheikhs into the Taliban's Afghanistan, today the Bush team ignores the almost daily flights from Dubai to the Somali airfield at Baledogle, about 70 miles northwest of Mogadishu. Here, chartered jets bring men and materiel for al Qaeda affiliate al-Ittihad al-Islami and the Taliban-like Islamic Courts Union, which is slowly consolidating its control over Mogadishu.

Clinton Redux

In 1993, Bill Clinton came to the White House without foreign policy experience. He followed the advice of professional diplomats and, for eight years, did what was short-term popular, but long-term unwise.

He trusted U.S. security to the goodwill of international organizations. The intellectual elite applauded, even as Saddam Hussein, for example, exploited the United Nations for financial gain, the European Union funded Palestinian terrorists, and Iran developed secret nuclear facilities under the nose of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

He let public opinion polls determine national security. After a disastrous October 3, 1993, raid in Mogadishu, he ordered U.S. troops to evacuate the country, mission incomplete, a key factor, Osama bin Laden later said, in bolstering al Qaeda's confidence.

Bush's recent about-face also seems driven more by public relations than strategy. Bush administration figures once said they would not replicate Clinton's mistakes. On March 18, 2004, Rice told CNN interviewer John King that a proper U.S. response to 9/11 was "an American strategy that is bold and decisive and takes the fight to [the terrorists]" and not Clinton's laid-back, law-enforcement approach that "led to September 11." Four days later, Vice President Dick Cheney reiterated the message and then, on March 23, 2004, so did Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld.

Today, the Bush administration is in full retreat from that high ground. The Iranian president can threaten war, but if nuclear reactors are what it takes to get the United Nations to promise to consider whether to discuss talking about the possibility of taking action, then Bush is willing to agree. Meanwhile, authorities in Turkey complain that Central Intelligence Agency officers meet with representatives from Kurdish terrorist groups, former CIA officers meet with Hezbollah, and the State Department plays a shell game with Hamas, withholding money on one hand, but dispensing the same funds through the United Nations Refugee Works Administration with the other. Rice now even hints at scaling back U.S. opposition to the International Criminal Court. Like Clinton before him, Bush is being tempted by the siren song of international peer affirmation.

During his September 20, 2001, speech before the joint session of Congress, Bush declared, "We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail." Increasingly, though, the administration seems to be tiring and faltering. And if it retreats to the policies that led to 9/11, it will fail. ♦

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The New Band of Brothers

With the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division in Ramadi

By Michael Fumento

Ramadi, Iraq

Terrorist-infested Ramadi in the wild west of Iraq is for U.S. troops the meanest place in the country, "the graveyard of the Americans" as graffiti around town boast. There is no better place to observe American troops and the fledgling Iraqi army in combat. That's why I came. When military public affairs asked where I wanted to be embedded, I told them, "the redder, the better" (red means hostile). So they packed me off to Camp Corregidor in eastern Ramadi with the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The 506th's official motto is "Currahee," Cherokee for "stands alone." But they're better known as the "Band of Brothers"—so dubbed by author Stephen Ambrose and HBO (although the term originally applied to just one company in the regiment).

During the Battle of Falluja in November 2004, many of the enemy who had vowed to fight to the death, including foreign terrorists, slipped the U.S. cordon. Ramadi, a city of 400,000, was a logical destination. The southwest point of the Sunni Triangle, it lies about 30 miles west of Falluja and that much closer to Syria—a reliable source of both supplies and foreign jihadists. It's also the capital of Al Anbar province and a favorite stomping ground of al Qaeda in Iraq, led by Jordanian-born terrorist Abu Musab al Zarqawi until two 500 lb. bombs blew apart his hideout last Wednesday.

To most of the media, Baghdad is where Iraq begins and ends. So naturally, they think Baghdad is the most dangerous part of the country. Wrong. "The sheer scale of violence in Ramadi is astounding," wrote AP's Todd Pitman after spending time with several units there. Pitman arrived the same night I did. "One recent coalition tally of 'significant acts'—roadside bombs, attacks, exchanges of fire—indicated that out of 43 reported in Iraq on a single day, 27 occurred in Ramadi and its environs," he wrote in a dispatch. Track the weekly butcher's bill for all of Iraq and you'll often find that a third to a half of U.S. combat deaths are in this one city about a third the size of Baghdad.

Units that go "outside the wire" during the daytime are usually zapped. I went on two day patrols; both times we got hit. Capt. Joseph "Crazy Joe" Claburn, commander of C Company, told me by email after I left: "I have been involved in two firefights in the last two days. We fired over 1,500 rounds of .50 cal [.50 caliber ammunition from an M2 Browning heavy machine gun] and 500 of 7.62mm, 40 rounds of 40mm [40 millimeter grenades] and brought everybody out okay. However, yesterday we had a close friend and Marine hit in the knee. We found out today that he would lose his leg. Does anyone else in Iraq see this on a daily basis?"

There are four minarets within sniping distance of Corregidor, and the gentlemen in these places of worship regularly shoot at the raised observation posts around the camp and sometimes into the camp itself. Mortars as large as 122mm smash into Corregidor on average every other day. I saw a steel container (the kind carried on flatbed trucks and train cars) hit by a mortar; it looked like an aluminum can blown up with a cherry bomb. Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) pop up like mushrooms, and vehicle-borne IEDs delivered by young men determined to get at those 72 perpetually renewing virgins are also a constant threat.

But here in this hellhole, I found men who would have made their famous World War II forerunners proud. They are no longer paratroopers but are brave, bold, and elite in every sense of the word. The actions of these men in fighting an enemy less skilled than the Germans yet far more vicious and fanatical tell a story that has remained largely ignored. In fairness, Ramadi itself has been mostly ignored.

When it finally made headlines across the country in late May, it was because of bad reporting when the *Washington Post*'s Ellen Knickmeyer "broke the news" that 3,500

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men from the 1st Armored Division in Kuwait were being deployed there as emergency reinforcements for a city essentially lost to the terrorists. Actually, it was 1,500, of whom "some" are "likely to be sent to" Ramadi as the *New York Times* correctly reported. And the place is bad enough without such exaggerations as the claim by one of Knickmeyer's sources that al Qaeda runs it.

Welcome to Corregidor!

The Iraq war is covered mostly by reporters who hole up in Baghdad hotels and send out Iraqi stringers to collect what the reporters deem news, as an article in the April 6, 2006, *New York Review of Books* described in great detail. The reporters convert these accounts into prose and put them on the wire. Except for that all-powerful "Baghdad" dateline, they might just as well be writing from Podunk. But you can't just blame reporters for the non-coverage. I asked military public affairs for 15 days in Ramadi, was told the request had been granted, flew to Baghdad, and only then was informed that I would instead be sent to Falluja, with a few days in Ramadi to come later. Last year I was also told I would be embedded in Ramadi, only to have it denied entirely once I arrived in Iraq.

Part of the public affairs officers' reasoning probably is that it's bad karma to lose a reporter, and Ramadi is a likely place to do so as photographer Toby Morris discovered a few months earlier. While on patrol with the 1st Battalion's D Company, he tried to photograph some soldiers while standing in the middle of the road. A sniper nailed him in the thigh, shattering his femur. Sgt. Patrick Meyer leaped to drag him to safety, only to be shot himself in the leg while the sniper pumped a third round into Morris, snapping his ankle. Morris now has a rod in his femur and a plate in his ankle. Meyer is still recovering. Soldiers repeatedly told me this story, which initially I thought was meant to get a rise out of me. Later I realized it was intended as a warning; even small mistakes in Ramadi can lead to pain and death.

Corregidor is manned by four companies of 1st Battalion. A and C Companies are the "hunter-killers." B Company guards "Route Michigan" through the city, while D handles heavy weapons. Attached is a tank company from the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and a sapper (engineer) platoon to deal with explosives. There are also "enablers" to assist with the missions, comprising about 100 sailors, Marines, and airmen.

To get there, you take the "Dagger" convoy that travels down Route Michigan from Camp Ramadi (on the outskirts of town). The convoy is preceded by an explosives ordnance disposal unit that painstakingly checks the route for IEDs. On the next Dagger run after mine one such bomb would be found, but there were none this time.

As soon as we pulled into Corregidor and I opened the door of my Humvee, I heard the rattle of machine gun fire. Small arms fire is so common that within days you no longer notice it unless it's up close and personal. By coincidence, I was accompanied not only by AP's Pitman but also a third reporter, Army public affairs staff sergeant Robert Diggler. An extremely affable battalion commander, Lt. Col. Ron Clark, debriefed us. He told us that if we were looking for action, we'd find it.

Although firefights and other hostile action are routine, IEDs are the worst problem, he said. They were responsible for five of the six deaths his men have suffered since deploying in January. As of mid-May, the troops at Corregidor had suffered 380 attacks from IEDs while finding and destroying 667 more. Five deaths (and additional injuries) are tragic, but these numbers do counter the misimpression that "ingenious" insurgents are expert in making and laying bombs. In fact, they must expend a massive amount of effort and materiel to do any harm to coalition forces.

The best way by far of dealing with IEDs is to keep them from being planted. Several observation posts are set up around Corregidor for that purpose. A spotter sees a guy digging a hole in the road or beside it, and a sniper plugs him. Soon the bad guys catch on and rarely try to plant in viewable areas, concentrating on blind spots. One day Clark's men found and dispatched 18 IEDs in a stretch of road that couldn't be seen from the observation posts, he told us. The next day they returned and there were 18 more. So they just placed the road off limits.

Like every officer I spoke with, Clark bemoaned the lack of coverage for the tremendous job his men were doing. Even when Ramadi makes the news, reporters generally manage to overlook 1st Battalion. Two days before I arrived, the enemy launched a coordinated, three-sided attack on the governor's compound in the Marine sector of central Ramadi, including firing rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and machine guns from a mosque and its minaret. Both CNN and the AP covered the event in detail; neither reported that it was actually part of a coordinated series of attacks throughout much of Ramadi including against the 1/506th. Why? The reporters were near the governor's compound. No reporter; no news.

Clark told us that because attacks are so constant, body armor and helmet are required any time you leave a reinforced-roof building. This is quite inconvenient until you get used to it, and when the temperatures start spiking to 130 degrees, I'm sure it's more than inconvenient. Diggler told me he'd been to camps throughout Iraq during the previous nine months and had never seen one with such a requirement. There was good reason for it, though.

Corregidor is roughly the size of a Super Wal-Mart, including parking lot. Buildings and houses outside the perimeter that the enemy could temporarily occupy are so

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close they could practically heave mortars at us by hand. On average the camp gets shelled every other day. Radar that detects incoming shells supposedly gives you ten seconds to take cover; but I'm told in practice it's closer to three. Plenty of places in the camp are more than ten seconds from cover anyway. The body armor rule went into effect when the first round of a barrage crashed down about ten meters from the entrance to the headquarters building, killing two men who were seeking cover. You can still see the depression in the thick sidewalk where it landed. When I photographed it, reddish flower blossoms covered it, making it almost appear to be filled with blood.

An added "attraction" is the snipers who occasionally pop off a round into the camp from the minarets. They know of Americans' unwillingness to attack "religious" buildings, even when they're clearly being used for military activity. When I asked Col. Clark why Iraqi army or police couldn't be used to make sure nobody entered the mosques with weapons, he was quick to say, "We never hesitate" to fire back when fired upon. "However," he added, "our fight requires strict cultural and religious sensitivity in order to be successful and legitimize the Iraqi government and army." If, he said, "the Iraqi army and Iraqi police established check points and conducted security screens at mosques it would undoubtedly be viewed negatively by the Iraqi people whose trust is vital to our success."

Safe to say, some soldiers wish we were a bit less sensitive. The snipers take shots at the observation posts on a regular basis; though hitting anybody down in the camp would take an extraordinary shot. That said, one night I was walking with a small LED flashlight and cupping it with my hand to make the beam just wide enough to watch where my next footstep would be. I had almost wrenched my knee in a hole earlier in the day and didn't want to put myself out of commission. Suddenly, "Crack!" A sniper was trying to bean somebody, and I seemed a likely candidate. "Click!" Off went my light.

As I previously reported in these pages ("Back to Falluja," May 8, 2006), Iraqis on both sides generally are lousy shots. They usually kill through sheer volume of fire and luck. But there are foreigners who definitely know how to aim a rifle and may bring in weapons far more accurate than the standard AK-47.

The constant threat of snipers and of mortar attacks contributes greatly to the general unpleasantness of life in Corregidor. The camp is also short on amenities, even by Iraq standards. There is no post exchange (PX) packed with necessities and goodies, merely a truck that comes by about once a month. Just a couple of months before I arrived, the camp received its first portable toilets, although the men in some units still have to urinate in one place and go someplace else to finish their business, so that the solid waste may be burned. Chow, I was told, had also been awful, though by the time I arrived it was outstanding. On the other hand, A Company can't eat in its chow hall because its roof isn't reinforced and several mortar rounds have torn through and exploded inside. Compared with places like Camp Falluja—much less the Green Zone in Baghdad—Corregidor is a rat hole.

It's also short on men. Company strength should be 136. C Company originally had 138 men, but because of casualties and normal leave time, Claburn says he's down to only 102 men available for operations. "Luckily, I have not had any soldiers killed while on the battlefield," he says, but "I have taken a lot of casualties due to IEDs, shrapnel, and bullet wounds. I have close to 20 percent of my company right now eligible for Purple Hearts [awarded for wounds received in combat from hostile forces] if that tells you anything." That means that with his deployment not yet half over, he's already well below the 80 percent level long regarded as the minimum for operational preparedness.

"The 80 percent issue is legitimate," he says, "but I am under the assumption that I am still required to complete every mission that I am tasked with, despite a shortage of personnel. If that means [soldiers pulling] extra time on the guard tower or another day in OP [observation post] Hotel, or having to pull back-to-back missions, then so be it. That is our job."

For that matter, all Ramadi is tremendously undermanned by coalition forces. With the current numbers, there's no hope of outright defeating the insurgents, and no Falluja-style operation seems to be in the works. The Falluja fight inflicted terrible physical damage on that city, as I observed repeatedly on patrols there, and in any case would be difficult to replicate since Falluja had two natural barriers against which to pin the enemy, the Euphrates and Tigris, while Ramadi has only the Euphrates. It's believed such an attack would also permanently alienate the local Sunni leadership, which must play a role in stabilizing the area. Finally, remember that it was the Falluja fight that made Ramadi what it is today. Do we want to draw in jihadists and gradually kill them or simply scatter them again and let them take up residence elsewhere in the Anbar desert?

Knickmeyer's May 30 dispatch in the *Post* featured a selection of quotations from local sheikhs to a nameless Ramadi stringer that made the city sound like al Qaeda headquarters. Claburn went ballistic in reaction: "She spoke so loudly about how the insurgents have control of the city and how they threaten people in this city," he railed. "They do that all around Iraq; why else would we call them *terrorists*?"

The U.S. strategy in Ramadi is to improve relations with the civilians—who are more sympathetic than you might think because they passionately hate the foreign

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Photos by Michael Fumento

Spc. Robert Killion, on a Ramadi rooftop

Arabs and their efforts to impose radical Islam on Iraqis—and to keep the insurgency in check as the size and abilities of the local Iraqi army and police improve. The coalition inflicts grossly disproportionate casualties—1st Battalion and its support elements routinely kill more jihadists in a day than the entire unit has lost since arriving. Yet this incredible kill ratio is also disturbing. It seems that no matter how readily they're mowed down, the bad guys just keep on coming and coming.

Abrams Down!

Ten days before I arrived, during the night of April 9, 1st Battalion suffered its worst casualties of the deployment in a mini-"Black Hawk Down" situation. An IED flipped a Humvee, killing the driver from D Company. An M-1 Abrams tank went to retrieve it. For good reason, Corregidor has a large complement of tanks and other armored vehicles. Unfortunately, another IED made a lucky strike on the tank, cutting the fuel line and setting it ablaze. The men inside scrambled to safety, but now things got really messy.

You can't just abandon an Abrams, because it has unique equipment and armor. If the bad guys get hold of a single vital piece they could use it to determine ways of defeating these otherwise almost invincible behemoths. Further, they could sell the information to anybody with a vested interest in blowing up M-1s. You also can't just call in an airstrike on a tank, as is routinely done with downed aircraft. That's fine for destroying secret electronics, but blasting a tank just spreads out the parts.

To make things even more dicey, the Abrams carries a powerful 120mm main gun and three machine guns. The rounds for these weapons were "cooking off" in the fire, flying in all directions. They would continue to do so for the rest of the night, making retrieval too dangerous.

So the troops set up a perimeter and waited. As with the real downing of the Black Hawks in Somalia, the burning tank attracted bad guys from throughout the city. They kept pouring into the area to kill the infidels. But with their night-vision equipment and laser pointers, Americans own the night. The enemy came in droves and they died in droves. "The insurgents were so desperate to gain momentum against us that they were literally running into the streets to plant IEDs right in front of us or throwing them over walls," says Claburn. "It was purely amazing." By the time the rounds had stopped flying and the tank was recovered, 30 jihadists were confirmed dead. Disaster had been averted. But the price in blood was high. Two more soldiers from Headquarters Company had died when another IED ripped their Humvee apart. Later the engineers whose job it was to detect and remove IEDs came into Col. Clark's office, apologizing with tears in their eyes. "I told them you tried; you did your best; but you can't get all of them all the time," Clark said.

Firefight at Mulaab

My first patrol was with A Company, at night. The most exciting event was finding a cow tied up in a backyard. The bad guys had learned their lesson about night attacks. But next up was a day patrol with C Company to Mulaab, an area in southeastern Ramadi pretty much just outside the gate from Corregidor.

For this patrol, we're joined by 19 Navy SEALs. There seems no reason to have special ops around; apparently they just want to stay in practice. And so they will. We start out in a convoy of Humvees and M113 armored personnel carriers. The M113s are given extra protection from RPGs by metal cages (the soldiers call them "cheese graters") that detonate rounds before they strike the hull. We only travel a short distance before the reporters are invited to jump out and join the Iraqi army patrols. These aren't like the ones near Falluja, which are split about 50/50 between Iraqis and Americans. Here two Americans are attached to each patrol, but the Iraqis are in charge. These Iraqis seem far more professional than what I'd seen in the Falluja area. They've been repeatedly bloodied, and that makes all the difference.

The purpose of the mission is basically knocking on—and if need be—knocking down doors to look for enemy or enemy caches. I feel bad when we do this, but usually the people seem to understand. One woman identifies me as a

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journalist by my camera and scolds me like an angry chipmunk for violating her home. I just let her vent without telling her "*Ma barif Aribi*," or "I don't understand Arabic." Anyway, the kids love us; a girl holds up her littler sister thinking it will provide me with a better photo.

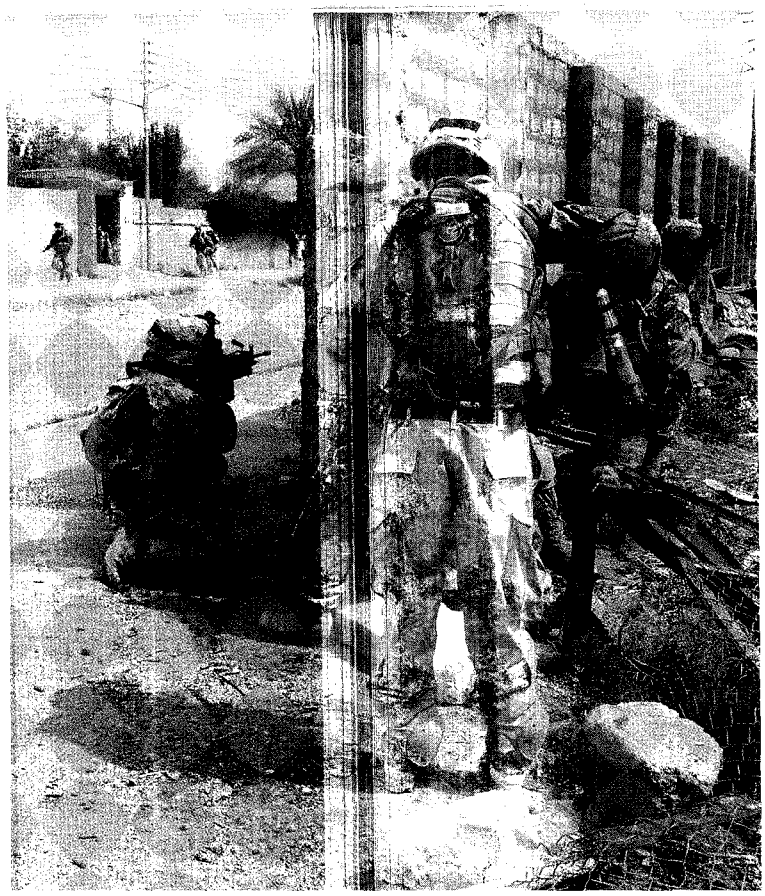
Photographer Toby Morris describes patrols with 1st Battalion as "just intense. You go out and you know something is going to happen." But Capt. Claburn, still an excited kid at 29, tells us *how long* it will take to happen. He explains that it takes the bad guys about 45 minutes to arrange an attack. "Within 15 minutes the spotters usually come out, and they'll identify your position," he says. (I'm quoting here from a dispatch by Todd Pitman.) "Within 30 minutes the weapons get brought in," he adds. "And usually about 45 minutes after being on the ground, you can pretty much guarantee that you're going to get shot at."

You can practically set your watch by the attacks. Just three minutes short of the Claburn mark, a white car bears down on an Iraqi patrol, and a passenger opens up with an AK. "Did I call it or what?" Claburn tells Pitman with a grin as the battle is joined. "Forty-two minutes on the ground. It's a science."

We break into a house and storm up the stairs to the roof, yelling "Friendly coming out!" so that those ahead of us won't think we're, well, not friendlies. No action. So we start back down, and all hell breaks loose so we storm right back up.

I'm with a number of SEALs, the two other reporters, and Claburn. It's the right building top. As we take fire, Claburn yells: "Hear them cracking over your head? That'll get your peter hard, huh?" A SEAL near me has an old wooden-stock M-79 40mm grenade launcher (affectionately called a "Thumper") that was phased out late in the Vietnam war in favor of the M-203, a 40mm tube attached below an M-16 rifle. I had wondered why he'd chosen to carry this but now found out. Another vehicle is spotted, a flatbed with four jihadists bearing AKs. Claburn and others bring it to a screeching halt with a fusillade of bullets to the engine block; then the SEAL with the Thumper smoothly extracts it from a strap around his waist as if it's just another appendage and drops the grenade dead center on the jihadists' truck. One shot; one kill. Those SEALs fight like machines. In a nice illustration of "the fog of war," one soldier who had a better view than me later said he thought we'd also been attacked by four vehicle-borne suicide bombers and a 12.7mm DShK heavy machine gun. Turns out none of this was true.

More bad guys are on the way, and we call in air support, which arrives in the form of two helicopter gunships. We ride out in a Humvee. Troops don't usually pursue the enemy, we are later told, because this allows the enemy to set ambushes. But it feels like our day has been cut short.



A machine gunner lays down [illegible] to [illegible] cross[illegible] soldiers.

Samuel Johnson once said, "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier." I'd been a soldier for four years, a paratrooper at that. But that wasn't enough, nor is my first exposure to combat today, because surrounded by bad-ass SEALs on a rooftop, I never felt truly at risk. No adrenaline pumped. Plus, I had forgotten in the excitement to put down the camcorder and take photos. As the expression goes, be careful what you wish for.

Firefight at OP Hotel

It's 7 A.M. We join up with A Company, with whom we'd been laughing and joking the night before. I had teased one amazingly young-looking red-haired fellow, asking him if his mother had given him permission to go out and fight with the other boys. He said he was 22 but was used to the ribbing, having been mistaken for a 12-year-old just a few years earlier. It's nice to go outside the wire with people you've already bonded with a bit—not that I wouldn't trust anybody in the 1/506th to be there for me if I needed them.

We three reporters load into an M113, and after what barely constitutes a ride we dismount just opposite a former hotel now jokingly called "the Ramadi Inn." In a video a soldier showed me on his laptop, enemy soldiers attacked observation posts on the building. They poured in fire as a diversion, while a dump truck packed with explosives sped towards the structure. The tactic failed. The GIs shot up the truck, which exploded in a massive ball of orange flame. Concussions all around, but no Americans were seriously

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hurt. To look at the hotel now, though, it seems like one good hard breath would knock it over.

Our combined American-Iraqi force hustles over to the patrol area because we're now well within range of a minaret and hence snipers—not that our friends with scopes confine themselves to these buildings. (One terrorist sniper in Ramadi was counter-sniped by an American in the Ramadi Inn. The terrorist was firing from a 4th-floor hospital window.) Even while you're scanning rooftops for that tell-tale head or glint of sun off a barrel or scope, you've still got to carefully watch your feet. "Look out for pressure-plate IEDs!" the soldier in front of me yells back. "What should I be looking for?" I ask. "Anything unusual," he says. "Or really anything at all." Gee, thanks!

The Iraqis are supposed to do the main patrolling today, while we enter the taller houses in the area and go up to the roof to provide fire support with machine guns, rifles, and grenade launchers. We always knock or even ring the doorbell first—honest! But no quick response and—bang!—the gates crash in. For some reason, neither doors nor gates ever seem to come down with one blow. One gate absolutely won't budge, so a large soldier comes and gives it an almighty kick. Crash! Down it goes. The lock and chain held; but the side has pulled right out of the concrete to which it was hinged. Thirty seconds later a guy from next door appears and, even as he's looking at the damage, he offers us the keys.

Inside the men kick a few doors. As a rule, they don't rip out of the wall as that gate did; but the locks are usually busted. They're trying to knock in a really beautiful hardwood one when a woman pops out of nowhere with the key. The soldiers don't like messing up people's homes but they also don't like guys popping out from nowhere and hosing them down with lead. So once you enter a house, each room gets checked. Once you get to the roof, the first thing you do is lay down a bright fluorescent flexible sheet of plastic. It's friend-or-foe identification in case air support is called in and you're not in the mood to have a 500-lb. bomb dropped down your windpipe. Only friendlies know the color of the day.

On the roof of the second house we hear gunfire for the first time today. I ask someone how long it's been since we dismounted. Forty-five minutes! Say what you will about the jihadists, they're punctual.

The walls are high, which is good protection from snipers but not good for observation. We think we've taken rounds directly on our position, but often you just can't tell. They either sail silently over your heads or smack into the wall too far below for you to know where they hit. We don't see anything to shoot back at, so we listen to the shooting, joke around a bit, listen to the shooting, joke around some more. We tease one soldier because his smoke grenade had gone off while hooked to the load-bearing equipment on his vest, which strangely enough burned him just below his crotch. Humor relieves tension better than Excedrin.

Finally we "exfil" (exfiltrate) to another house when it seems the shooting hasn't just paused but ended. This would be a feature of the firefight to come. Just when things get peaceful and you think it's all over, suddenly the enemy starts firing again and with more weapons than before. We occupy the top of another building, which has an accessible roof on the left side and an excellent observation position on the right. I follow a soldier with a machine gun to the right, not knowing of the rooftop position. As I wait patiently to get a photo when he opens up on the jihadists, I'm exposed on my right by windows that go ceiling to floor. There's only a thin pillar for cover. I try to make myself skinny, but the pillar protects almost none of me. We hear bursts of fire every few minutes, but it's not until I hear "Way to go Killion!" from the soldier in front of me that I realize it's Spc. Robert Killion who with his 7.62mm M240B medium machine gun has just zapped a bad guy carrying an AK-47 on a bicycle. I haul tail over to find Killion on the roof, operating with Sgt. Jonathan Falk. Out of four confirmed enemy KIA that day, Killion would get two from his position.

I still needed that photo, so I jokingly order the two men to just pick out some inanimate target and fire while I snapped away. Then—zing!—a sniper round practically takes Killion's head off. "Holy f—!" he shouts. "Mother f—! That hit right in front of me!" But seconds later, he whoops. "Whew! Yeah!" As I would soon discover myself, Churchill really nailed it when he wrote that "nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result." Anyway, Killion gets payback and then some. Shortly another jihadist pops up and with a burst of fire Killion drops him, while I get my photo of him with his brass casings bouncing off my chest.

Now it's like a bizarre joke; enemy firing stops for awhile and we're ordered downstairs. But as soon as we start down, the firing starts again and it's back to the rooftop to fire back. Meanwhile, the machine gunner where I had first been standing on the other side of the building is finally letting loose. So I go back over there and watch a soldier pump three grenade rounds onto the enemy with his M203. The final one strikes home, making it three confirmed KIA from our house. "Right place at the right time!" I'm thinking.

Right place at the right time indeed. I look where I had been standing exposed to the windows. About where my head had been there's a large pock mark in the opposite wall. The bullet might have drilled me had I remained there; I can't say. Then I see the window. There's a nice clean hole just where my upper right side was—where my body armor has absolutely no protection, much less the new side ceramic plates everybody in 1st Battalion wears. This

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The wooden-stock M-79 40mm grenade launcher, aka "thumper"

puts me in a pensive mood. No Killionesque whoops. But there's little time to contemplate my mortality before the order comes to "exfil" for real and start trekking back to the pickup point at a good trot. All quiet on the OP Hotel front. Or so I think. But now it's going to get really bad.

The Ramadi Run

The moment everybody has exited their respective houses the bad guys hit us big time. Machine gun and rifle fire comes from all directions. So it seems, anyway. Maybe this is just because of sound reverberations off the walls and tightly-packed houses; maybe it *is* coming from all directions. We could pull back into the houses and simply shoot it out all day, but this would greatly endanger the civilians inside. So we take option number two: run like crazy. It's like the scene towards the end of *Black Hawk Down*, when the Rangers run the "Mogadishu Mile" while being fired at the whole time before reaching safety in the stadium. I don't think they ran a mile, and I know we don't have a mile to go, but it's going to seem like several.

Smoke grenades conceal us as we cross the first wide street. After that, the tactic is to have one machine gunner lay down fire from the edge of a building or wall that's closest to the area we need to cross. Another then darts across until he, too, finds cover and starts laying down a stream of lead towards the enemy position. He's wearing about 25 pounds of body armor, many pounds more of ammo, and carrying a weapon considerably heavier than the M-16 rifle. But if somebody clocks him he'll qualify for the Olympics.

Now the rest of us dash across the intersection like squirrels on steroids. It doesn't matter how much gear you're carrying, or whether you've wrenched a knee or ankle. It doesn't matter how much junk is lying in your path. Like Peter Pan, you fly. A few guys fire their rifles sideways from the hip towards the enemy as they cross wider areas. You can't hit anything that way; but if you get an enemy to duck for a few seconds you win.

I shout out my blood type to the Army reporter, SSgt. Diggler, who's just ahead of me. "I'm O-positive!" They always ask reporters their blood type before patrols. Why did they forget this time? I find an orange dumpster that, with the wall behind me, shields me front and back. But the firing seems to be mainly coming from the side of the dumpster. Gotta keep moving anyway. A few minutes later I'm zipping across the street at a non-intersection to join up with the main body of men along a wall. Suddenly a medium machine gun starts hammering away behind me and it sounds so close the barrel could practically be poking me in the butt. A second before, the wall looked five meters away; why does it now look like five miles? I drop onto the road and make like a squished bug, then immediately start rolling to the wall. Not forgetting my mission, I keep my video camera up (the footage makes you dizzy), but probably two dozen GIs see me drop and are sure I'm hit. "Holy s—! holy s—!" one shouts. There goes another embed.

One brave soul, who proved to be Sgt. Falk, risks his hide by jumping from his relatively safe position along the wall to pull me in. "I'm just taking cover!" I yell. But he's determined to rescue me, even as my rolling and the lack of a handle on my body armor makes it impossible for him to grab me. That I wasn't actually hurt makes him no less a hero in my book. When I get to the wall I stand erect so everybody can see I'm okay. Then a soldier slips and all eyes turn to him. He's okay. He just needs water. I offer him the nozzle of my Camelbak water bladder. Having broken a promise to myself that no soldier would risk his life for me, I feel good giving just a little something back.

I don't see it myself, but apparently while we catch our breath beside one wall machine gun fire tattoos it above us, dropping bits of concrete on guys' heads. Thank heaven for the tendency of the Iraqis (sadly ours as well as theirs) to shoot high. I'm far too busy trying to stay alive to have time to be scared. And so we go from wall to wall, across alleys, streets, and open spaces that look forever long.

As we approach our pickup area and relative safety, I come across an Iraqi soldier with blood streaming from his

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face onto his body armor. "Medic!" I yell. To the first American soldiers who see him it appears it was just a bad nick. But—bizarrely enough—he's taken a ricochet round sideways through the nose.

Finally we approach a protected position near where we dismounted, with concrete on top and one side. Safe at home? Not yet. "Incoming!" somebody yells, and we dive that few extra feet for cover. There is an explosion in the distance and we see a plume of smoke. But it turns out to have been some joker trying to scratch the paint on an Abrams with an RPG round.

The tank from what I can see arrives too late, but we do have support from the .50 cals on the M113's. Nothing comes from the air until we reach the safe point, when a fighter jet swoops over and flies off. The rules of aircraft engagement are tough within Ramadi city limits for two reasons. First, it's heavily populated and it's all too easy to accidentally kill civilians. Second, with more and more joint American-Iraqi patrols it's also too easy to kill friendlies. But the Iraqi soldiers don't necessarily understand this. Knowing I was a *sahafi*, a reporter, one points to his nasally impaired friend and then to the departing jet and tells me, "Ameriki no good!"

Well, excuse me! The Iraqis did perform admirably by their standards. They held their positions and suppressed enemy fire. But without our guns, they'd have taken terrible losses. As is, other than the nose shot, only one Iraqi soldier was injured, in the calf, and he was evacuated from the battle zone immediately and presumably under heavy fire. Amazingly no Americans were injured. The other reporters' cameras did catch me slamming into the street so you could say I wasn't a casualty but I played one on TV.

In the M113 on the way back, you might have expected a sort of stunned silence, yet there was anything but. The sounds were of excited chatter and outright laughter. Later, as we reporters looked at each other's video footage, we laughed all over again. It's hard to explain. The laughter is partly in relief. And keep in mind that we knew nobody had even been badly hurt on our side. But it was also like the best amusement park ride you've ever been on times ten. Churchill was right. All three of us reporters immediately inquired as to whether there would be another patrol that afternoon or the next day, only to find that patrols had been halted because of an upcoming operation that ultimately never took place. But I was intrigued that several people during the day said to me, using almost the exact words, "Heard you had fun out there today!"

And yes, it was strangely thrilling for the soldiers as well. "I don't think we've been under heavy fire like that before," Pfc. Tony Wickline of A Company told me. "I mean, we've been shot at a lot but today . . . " Then he just started shaking his head and muttering: "Uh, uh, uh, uh, uh."

Letters from Home

After I left Ramadi, I began receiving emails from relatives of the troops, grateful for the photos and stories I had posted on my blog. They are a reminder of how pitifully little coverage the fighting men in Ramadi have received. "My son is in Camp Corregidor," wrote one, "and these are the first really decent pictures of the area I have seen. . . . He doesn't say much about the conditions, so I have to prowl the Internet to find what I can. He doesn't want his mom and dad to worry more than we have to."

Another, from a wife whose husband recently departed the area: "I couldn't figure out why if it was so *dangerous* there, where was the news? Rarely did you ever hear Ramadi mentioned, yet I knew the danger that was there." A third: "It's hard to talk [to my husband] on the phone and not be able to know what he is doing or what all is happening. . . . Just hearing what they are going through for our country makes me so proud that I married into the military!"

Jennifer Vickers thanked me for a photo that showed little more than the fingers of her A Company husband along one edge. But that was a lot more of him than she'd seen in a long time. A mother wrote that her son "can not say what he does. All I get is 'I am good' but he sounds tired. You gave me some insight into his life." It was signed, "Scared mom of Spc. [omitted]."

The letters seemed to reflect the same sense of purpose I saw in the men of 1st Battalion and its support elements at Camp Corregidor. Life is hard, death and injury are always just around the corner, and the men know that when they leave they'll simply be turning the sector over to a new unit. No peace treaty signing on the deck of the U.S.S. *Missouri*.

I pointed out to Claburn that Shakespeare wonderfully captured the feelings of men who have fought together and relied on each other in the face of death when he wrote:

We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile.

But the Bard was specifically describing the soldiers of Henry V celebrating a devastating and historic defeat of the French at Agincourt. There would be no such clear-cut victory in Ramadi for the New Band of Brothers. Claburn disagreed:

"Every day we go out into the Mulaab, we experience a victory. The blood and sweat that is earned will forever live with them, and the stories we share—the stories we few share—will only be understood by those who were there. You have experienced the sheer terror of not knowing if you'd make it back to the safety of the concrete barriers and sandbagged roofs of Camp Corregidor. These men do it every day and without question. They do it and they love the victory we share against the enemy." ♦

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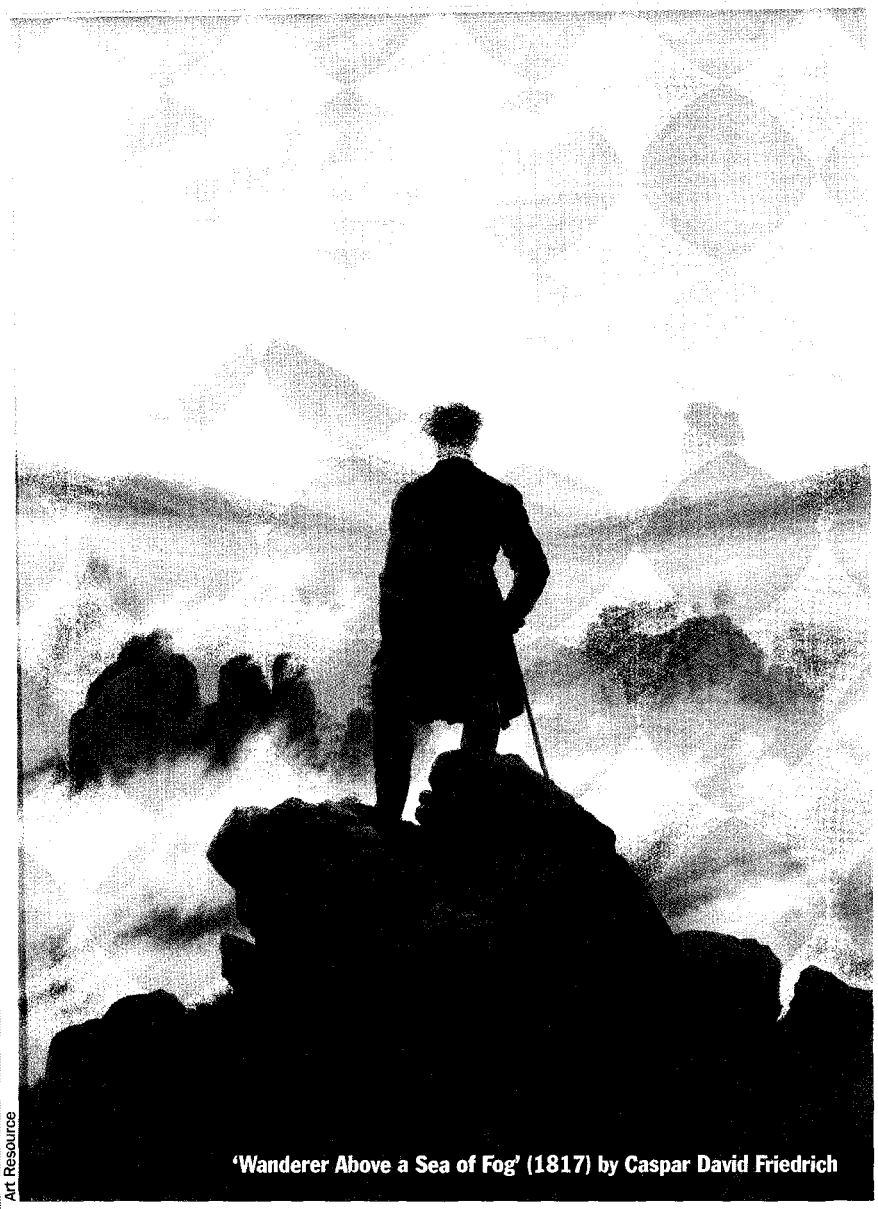
The German Problem

It's the conflict between culture and politics.

BY STEVEN OZMENT



'Wanderer Above a Sea of Fog' (1817) by Caspar David Friedrich

Art Resource

In *The Origins of Modern Germany* (1946) the late English medievalist Geoffrey Barraclough described "the German problem" as a long-standing structural deficit: the absence of political unity and a representative form of government. From the late 11th century, when German dynasties failed to consolidate a monarchy, to the aftermath of Prussian unification (1871), when a true democratic polity remained blocked, German history has been a sad story of enlightened political development repeatedly cut short. For Barraclough, there was always only one sure remedy: "a limited democratic Germany [secure] within its historic boundaries," the unfolding of which the world has been watching since 1945.

Wolf Lepenies, a Berlin sociologist and one of Germany's foremost intellectuals, makes no mention of Barraclough, but he has an emphatic answer to why Germans have come so slowly and grudgingly to political unity and a democratic polity: "the catastrophic German habit" of valuing culture over politics, and even substituting it for politics. Beyond the structural/political problem that Barraclough definitively elaborated, Lepenies's study calls attention to an equally insidious cultural/moral problem that has also plagued Germans throughout their history. He calls it "the apolitical German soul."

The Seduction of Culture in German History
by Wolf Lepenies
Princeton, 270 pp., $24.95

For Lepenies, the apolitical German is a true universal; this is "a national attitude prevalent throughout German history." "German inwardness" and a penchant for "metaphysical flight" are its existential roots—a kind of inner *Sonderweg* separating the romantic German soul from the empirical Latin and the utilitarian Anglo-Saxon.

The historical roots are the stunning failures of German politics. In the two centuries Lepenies surveys, the most crippling of them came in the aftermath of Napoleon's defeat (1815). At that time a liberated Germany confronted old rulers determined to restore the political status quo ante, demanding "the submission of civil society to the state and the surrender of the individual to the community." Having been denied political participation all too long, the German bourgeoisie had scant affinity with, and respect for, the old regime and joined Goethe in the flight to a cultural national identity (*Kulturstaat*).

Lepenies is horrified by the paradoxical nature of the Germany he describes: On the one hand, "a com-

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munity almost slavishly docile to constituted authority," on the other, "a community with a rich, critical, creative cultural life." He does not, however, search out the apolitical German to praise him, but rather to warn him away from a once and future folly. A people who discover their nation in national theater do not have their political destiny in their hands. The amateur Nazis became specialists in cultural-political extravaganzas, knowing well how to take aesthetic advantage of an apolitical post-World War I German citizenry.

Lepenies's subjects are German intellectuals of the last two centuries who either substantially addressed, or became personally entangled in, the opposed German worlds of "culture" (the inner intellectual, artistic, and religious life) and "civilization" (the surface political, economic, and social life). Among many worthies, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Thomas Mann receive the lion's share of the author's attention: Goethe for the exemplary ease with which he came to move between the two worlds, and Mann for his utter inconsistency in reconciling them.

Lepenies's American *bête noire* is Allan Bloom, whose *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) blamed German romantics and nihilists (specifically, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Max Weber, Martin Heidegger, and Mann) for a perceived shifting of the American mind away from wholesome, Hellenistic rationalism to gloomy European "relativism" and neutral values.

To the extent that such a shift occurred, Lepenies pins responsibility for it on a French connection rather than a German one. He accuses Bloom of reading German philosophy secondhand through its French poachers: Edmund Husserl and Heidegger via Jean-Paul Sartre, Weber via Raymond Aron, and Nietzsche via Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Lepenies goes on to point out a deeper and darker French connection in present-day America, one dating back to the French Revolution of 1789, namely, the shared belief that freedom and democracy may be imposed on other lands by military force, when necessary.

This perceived old French, new American, connection has moved some German intellectuals to suggest that their "revolution"—the reunification of Germany in 1989-90—by virtue of its lack of Terror, morally tops that of the French in 1789 and, by extension, morally lifts it above the American and the Russian as well. Unfortunately, prominent German intellectuals have trashed that argument, while other critics have insisted that "real" revolutions shed blood. However, the very existence of such reasoning by postwar Germans suggests the longing and confusion of their cultural-political woes.

The irony of Bloom's having studied with the German émigré Leo Strauss is also not lost on Lepenies, whose partisan defense of the new cultural Fatherland, while correctly couched (he does not directly use the "N" word [Nazi]), here goes a step too far. Although known in America as the father of neoconservatism and a brain-trustee of a Republican administration that wages a cultural war against "Old Europe," Strauss in his real professional life was a leading classical scholar whose studies "epitomized classical European thought."

Because that ancient thought respected "the natural and divine foundations of the rights of man," Strauss was shaken when he discovered in America what Lepenies calls "the influence of a certain strand of German thought" that denied those rights. That deplorable strand was, of course, the pernicious foreign policy of wartime Germany, which Lepenies would have his reader believe also to be that of the present-day White House. As he paraphrases Strauss: "victorious in defeat, German culture had proved [in America that] it could still take its revenge on politics."

Lepenies also regrets Bloom's lack of respect for Thomas Mann's struggle to exorcise his own apolitical demons. Despite American citizenship, an honorary degree from Harvard, and New York celebrity, Mann righteously returned to Switzerland (1952), declaring America "a land of gangsters . . . an air-conditioned nightmare," with references to its rising military power and McCarthyism. Enamored of America's operas, libraries, and museums, but not of its political traditions and institutions, Mann becomes the premier example of the wall between culture and politics in modern Germany. Among German intellectuals, Goethe, who in the early 19th century praised the United States as an "antidote to European misery [and its] hope for rejuvenation," remains the more reliable America-booster.

On the German home front, Lepenies recounts telling cultural-political clashes among German intellectuals. There is Hannah Arendt's poetic protest during the days of the Nuremberg trials, when she insisted that Nazi crimes and guilt were beyond all law. Her teacher, Karl Jaspers, responded with the plea that she not endow human evil with "greatness," but rather confront it in its "total banality," thereby giving her a phrase she would later make famous in the subtitle of her book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil.*

There are the running debates between "inner" and "outer" émigrés, those who stayed in Nazi Germany, and professedly remained aloof from Nazi politics, and those who fled Germany for good—each side claiming to have contributed more to "the survival of the German spirit" than the other.

And then there is the clash between Weber and Friedrich Meineke—the one insisting that the German problem cannot be solved by looking back to the past ("the Weimar classics are not political advice"), while the other urges postwar Germans to form "Goethe [study] groups," in which they may develop their inner German spirit with the assistance of "the noblest music and poetry."

Speaking for a brave, new modern generation of German intellectuals, Lepenies believes their destiny is no longer behind them, but now firmly in their hands. He dismisses Meineke's "Goethe groups" as a continuation of Nazi aestheticism when, in fairness,

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they promise some needed perspective on the positive heritage of German history.

Looking back, Lepenies generally evaluates postwar Germans harshly. Ordinary Germans are said to have responded to the war not with a sense of responsibility, or any regret, but with self-pity. Among intellectuals, "blurring past moral options became the prerequisite for mastering the present and planning for the future." German academics and pundits found a bonanza in the moral scrutiny of Nazi-era historians, philosophers, and sociologists. Here, they have been joined by an international community of foreign intellectuals, who also incessantly revisit and memorialize the war and its atrocities, keeping the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust at the forefront of German history, whatever the latter's present-day state.

Having written to this point with a "bang," Lepenies concludes his study of modern German intellectual history with a modest status report on German culture and politics. Disappointingly, he cites, of all possible persons, Günter Grass's dual role as political campaigner for Willy Brandt and novelist to the world as the best illustration of the "normalization" of German culture and politics. Charmed by Grass's ability "to practice everyday politics without a certain disdain and arrogance," he virtually ignores the writer's condemnation of political reunification in 1989-90, which is surely a stunning example of utopian culture impeding vital politics.

Playing Jaspers to Arendt, Lepenies ends his rambling and riveting book with refreshing praise for "small Holocaust monuments" that eschew the brutal aesthetic politics of the ever larger ones. Among his examples is the touching diary of Victor von Klemperer. Here, Lepenies points out, is a personal mirror for "normal ordinary Germans," who may freely and privately behold the "indecency [and] small civil courage" that was shown to Jews and other victims of National Socialism in the everyday life of the past.

Now there's a real normalization of culture and politics! ♦

Love and Beauty

A dreamscape of Soviet life and art.

BY DAVID SKINNER

Olga Grushin's debut novel, *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, about the undoing of an establishment art critic in Moscow during the 1980s, moves deftly back and forth between surrealism and a close-in third-person character study. The result is a riveting English-language story of a somewhat baffling type.

On the one hand *Dream Life* is a breakthrough novel whose story pivots neatly on the dreams and interior time-traveling of its central character, Anatoly Pavlovich Sukhanov. On the other hand, it's a classic 19th-century novel in which an individual's fate evokes his entire past and various mysteries of identity and history are explained while a whole string of narrative parallels are as meticulously balanced as a suspension bridge.

Putnam

The Dream Life of Sukhanov
by Olga Grushin
Putnam, 354 pp., $24.95

Grushin herself is also a bit of this and that. Born and partly raised in Moscow, this daughter of Soviet intellectuals received her college education in the United States at Emory and became a citizen in 2002. She cites her parents as a resource for learning about the Moscow art world before the collapse of the Soviet Union, but was herself a student of art history at the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts.

At the novel's opening, Sukhanov is the pompous editor of the journal *Art of the World*—a position to which one does not ascend without the blessing of Communist party VIPs. His professional success depends on his being editorially circumspect: "Above all, Sukhanov was famous for his skillful omissions."

Indeed, "Western art of the present century wandered through the pages of the magazine like a mildly embarrassing hallucination—a mute befuddled miserable ghost who was ridiculed, kicked, and exorcised, but whose name was never pronounced and whose face was never revealed." For his politically correct art criticism, Sukhanov is awarded a handsome apartment, to which he returns after a long day to forget his worries with a cup of cognac-laced tea and a plate of chocolate éclairs (while, it goes without saying, millions of humbler Soviets feast on stale bread ends and meatless borscht).

As with apartments and liquors, so with beauty, which also becomes the private treasure of a few, while, in the name of progress and morale, kept safe from the masses. This is one of the novel's most intriguing themes: What happens to beauty under a regime that recognizes beauty only in the state's own mythological image? The resulting aesthetic approves countless pictures of farm tractors while actual masterpieces of surrealism or impressionism are relegated to the dusty base-

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ments of state-run museums, where only those collaborating with the regime's repression of beauty (curators, art journal editors) get to see them at all.

But the novel is no mere exposé of the intellectual corruption at the heart of the Soviet art establishment; it is also a journey into the private world of one of its victims, who happens to be one of its perpetrators. Beauty, here, too, becomes a private matter as Sukhanov's greatest reward for selling out is a lasting marriage to his gorgeous wife, herself the daughter of an officially approved (and much rewarded) artist.

Yet love and beauty come at the cost of love of beauty, as Sukhanov's own surrealist paintings disappear down the memory hole, while his homes become successively more luxurious, and his bourgeois family life fills the space once occupied by his passion for art.

A major part of the thrill of reading this novel comes from the games Grushin plays with the reader. Everyday actions—the sipping of a coffee, a train conductor's request for a passenger's ticket—swivel the narrative, without warning, into scenes taking place 20 years prior in different locales under different circumstances. One can't help but admire the consistent skill with which Grushin navigates these rapids—and in English, her second language, no less.

There is, however, something a little too studied, at times, about Grushin's method, possibly the side effect of a thoroughness that does not easily translate into English-language novels of such stylistic ambition. A cover blurb likens Grushin to Nabokov and Bulgakov and Gogol, but she is altogether less antic than these great Russians. Despite its clever games, there is strangely little silliness in *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, though dreams make perfect soil for silly plants to take root.

Grushin's word choice, too, occasionally tends to fussy terms (lacunae, velveteen) one sees only in dictionaries and pretentious poetry. The upside of her writing style is a powerful intrusion of imagery into an idiom and form both energized by the sudden appearance of demanding word pictures and arresting visual details. Both qualities, the visual and the overdone, can be seen in a sentence such as this: "The sun, about to glide below the stubble of antennas on neighboring roofs, suffused the air, the trees, the peeling stucco facades, with a vespertine lucidity."

One feels grateful for the clarifying humor of *stubble* and put off by the heavyhanded *vespertine*.

But these are mere tics in a writing style one can imagine expanding in a hundred different ways. In the meantime, it proves perfectly effective for realizing the self-collapsing dream novel of a Soviet artist searching for the soul he traded in for a beautiful wife, a tony apartment, and a chauffeured car. ♦

Visions of Infinity

A mathematical voyage brought Kurt Gödel to the shores of madness. **BY DAVID GUASPARI**

Rebecca Goldstein's fine book makes Kurt Gödel the protagonist of a tragic love story. Enamored, at age 20, with the Platonic vision of a realm of objective truth, he made his life a quest for it. His work in mathematics and logic created new fields of research and provoked voluminous commentary. Arguably, it shed light on the nature of the mind and, therefore, on what it means to be human. But the story ends in bitter irony. Gödel's work was routinely enlisted in a war against the very possibility of objective truth, and his final years were consumed by what is, at least figuratively, a disease of reason gone wild: clinical paranoia.

Incompleteness
The Proof and Paradox of Kurt Gödel
by Rebecca Goldstein
Norton, 296 pp., $22.95

Goldstein, a philosopher and novelist, presents a moving picture of a passionate life devoted to "abstruse" concerns and invokes, appropriately, the Platonic theme that a genuine philosopher hungers for truth with an intensity that is erotic. *Incompleteness* is much more rewarding than the garrulous publishing phenomenon *Gödel, Escher, Bach*—which labors under the handicap that Gödel, Escher, and Bach have no nontrivial connections with one another.

What can be plausibly said about the inner life of someone as guarded and opaque as Kurt Gödel? Someone who limited his public statements to propositions that he could rigorously prove, and was given in private to show-stopping gnomic utterance: e.g., "I don't believe in natural science."

Goldstein finds a key in Gödel's deep friendship with Albert Einstein, who said that he went to his office every day "for the privilege of walking home with Gödel." They were intellectual peers. (Gödel, though unknown to the general public, was venerated by the world's best mathematicians.) But their personalities could not have been more different—one furtive and enigmatic, the other with the public face of an affable secular saint.

What bound them together? Both believed deeply that science is a search for objective truth, and worked only on problems they believed to be scientifically and philosophically important. Most significant, Goldstein sug-

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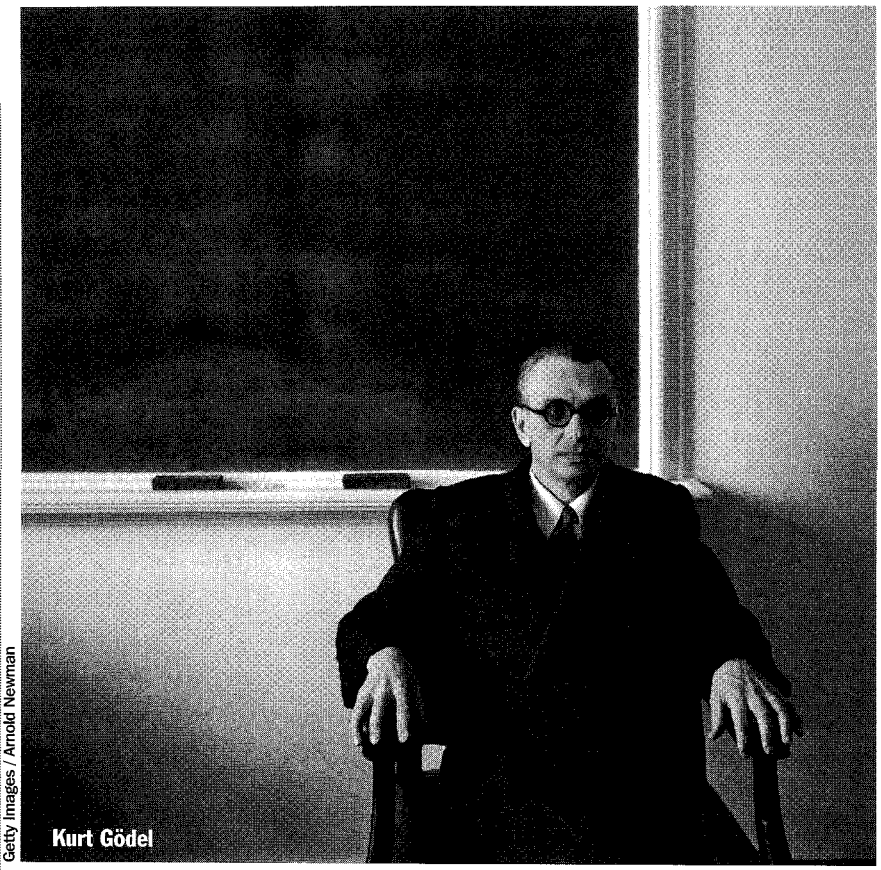
gests, is that these very commitments made them "intellectual exiles," because the 20th century saw (and we are still seeing) an "intellectual revolt against objectivity and rationality." Goldstein reads Gödel's work as a direct response. (I should note that the eminent logician Solomon Feferman, one of the editors of the exemplary edition of Gödel's collected works, has sharply and convincingly criticized Goldstein for reading Gödel's later philosophical convictions into his younger self.)

To understand why a mathematical result might have philosophical implications requires attention to the surprisingly central role that the philosophy of mathematics has played in the history of Western thought. Anyone who wonders about what we know and how we know it will be struck by the peculiar nature of mathematics. It seems to offer truths that are certain but not based on any actual experience of the world. Immanuel Kant summed up this peculiarity in a famous question that he placed at the center of the *Critique of Pure Reason*: How is pure mathematics possible?

We'll consider two broad answers that predate (and postdate) Kant, which I'll call Platonist and anti-Platonist. Plato regarded mathematics as a model of true knowledge, of apprehending the world's underlying reality undistorted by its appearance. The anti-Platonists, a heterogeneous coalition of the unwilling, hold that any supposed "knowledge" making no appeal to experience can be certain only insofar as it says nothing at all about the world. "All unmarried men are mortal" is an awfully good bet but, like any summary of experience, is open to revision. "All unmarried men are bachelors" is certain precisely because it relies on no facts about men or marriage, but only on the definitions of the words it contains.

The anti-Platonists could be refuted by proving mathematical results with philosophical significance. The results would be certain, because mathematical; yet the very fact that they provoked—better yet, required—a philosophical response would show that



Getty Images / Arnold Newman

Kurt Gödel

they were most assuredly about *something*. The heart of Goldstein's book is an account of such a result, Gödel's First Incompleteness Theorem.

I will state it anachronistically, by reference to computing. Euclid presents geometry as a *theory*: a body of *axioms*, taken as self-evident, from which further geometrical truths are deduced by *proofs*, which are sequences of logical steps. By the end of the 19th century it had become clear that any known field of mathematics (and anything likely ever to be accepted as mathematics) could, in principle, be expressed in a *formal* theory.

A theory is formal if a computer can be programmed to recognize whether or not any alleged proof is valid. Insight may be needed to devise proofs but, if they are formal, not to check them: A computer can scan a sequence of symbols and mindlessly apply mechanical rules to determine whether it represents valid logical steps starting from axioms.

Any "useful" theory can be made formal (because all mathematics can), must be consistent (not allow the deduction of contradictory results), and will incorporate at least the ability to perform elementary arithmetic (with rules for addition, multiplication, and simple algebra, such as $x+y=y+x$).

The First Incompleteness Theorem, slightly cleaned up, says that any such "useful" theory is incomplete; that is, there are propositions of elementary arithmetic that the theory can neither prove nor disprove. In fact, we can find such a proposition that is essentially the statement of an elaborate algebraic rule. And someone who understands what that proposition means will recognize that it is *true*—because, under a clever interpretation, it means that it cannot be proven.

Were we to add this proposition as a new axiom, the Incompleteness Theorem would immediately provide another truth unprovable in this beefed-up theory. There is no escape.

This is head-spinning. How, for example, can we "recognize" that some arithmetical rule is true if we cannot prove it from beloved axioms that, hitherto, seemed to say all we knew about numbers? And just how does one reason to a conclusion about the limits of reasoning?

It is also an affront. David Hilbert,

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one of history's greatest mathematicians, testified to an ancient faith when he said that "In mathematics, there is no *ignorabimus*." When we seek an answer, "we must know. We will know."

Goldstein presents a sketch of Gödel's reasoning that should be accessible to a general reader. Some small technical miscues are not seriously misleading. (For the cognoscenti: The fixed-point lemma is misstated; and the demonstration that the "Gödel sentence" is unprovable appeals unnecessarily to its meaning, and thereby relies on a stronger hypothesis than consistency.)

Gödel announced his results in one terse paragraph at the end of a three-day technical meeting—and made not a ripple. Only the great scientific polymath John von Neumann realized that something important had happened. But what?

Gödel's interpretation is startling. It follows, he says, that at least one of the following two things must be true—and he, in fact, believed both: "Either the human mind cannot be reduced to the working of the brain" or "mathematical objects and facts . . . exist objectively and independently of our mental acts and decisions." (These quotations come from *Logical Dilemmas*, John Dawson's biography of Gödel. Goldstein cites opinions a bit less provocative.)

Here's my guess at what he meant: If my mind *is* only my brain, it's some kind of computer, so all its purely deductive workings are captured within some "useful" theory. But my mind can also prove the First Incompleteness Theorem, allowing it to recognize some mathematical truths that the theory does not imply. That act of recognition can't be a deduction, so must be a perception—of an independently existing mathematical realm.

Imagine Gödel's dismay, if not despair, when many drew the opposite conclusion: that mathematics had lost its certainty and been revealed as a social practice based on arbitrary decisions about what axioms to choose. Or when, as Goldstein says, "[Ludwig] Wittgenstein never accepted that Gödel had proved what he provably did prove" since it would have contradicted Wittgenstein's deep belief that logic was necessarily empty, and could contain no surprises.

Gödel's last years became a perverse *reductio ad absurdum* of his sustaining belief that everything has a rational explanation. What had been intermittent episodes of paranoia and depression became chronic. He feared that his food might be poisoned, and that dangerous gases were seeping from his radiators and ice box. He starved to death.

Goldstein does not avert her eyes from this obscene ending, but does not allow it the final word. She concludes with an elegant novelistic turn. Gödel pursued philosophical questions about time in his characteristic way, by seeking results that could be established mathematically. He produced a surprising solution of Einstein's gravitational field equations, a hypothetical universe in which it is possible to travel in time. If time does loop back on itself, Goldstein says, "then a young Gödel will once again sit in a college classroom in Vienna, transfigured by the notion of the infinite eternal verities. . . . He will dream, silently and audaciously, of proving a mathematical theorem the likes of which has never before been seen, a mathematical theorem that will illuminate the nature of mathematics itself.

"And then he will do it." ♦

Undo the Carioca

How Brazil betrays its greatest city.

BY REUBEN F. JOHNSON

The Brazilian journalist and writer Ruy Castro will be remembered as the man responsible for chronicling the history of modern Brazil—and making the outside world aware of how fascinating this largest of Latin American nations truly is. His most recent work proves that there is no one who can more eloquently describe the intricate tapestry of music, politics, art, architecture, daily life, and social trends that are the story of the country's world-famous city, Rio de Janeiro.

Rio de Janeiro
Carnival Under Fire
by Ruy Castro
Bloomsbury, 244 pp., $16.95

Castro is well known to Brazilophiles for his incomparable history of Bossa Nova music and its impact on the world. The English-language version (*Bossa Nova: The Story of the Brazilian Music That Seduced the World*) perfectly captures the style of Castro's chit-chatty native Brazilian tongue. Translations are always fraught with the danger of losing the shaded and subtle meanings that are unique to a specific culture, but happily this is not the case here. Castro's book recreates the perfect image of Rio during the height of Bossa Nova's popularity. You can visualize a world of sunshine, beaches, waves, and trendy night clubs inhabited by scores of young musicians and songwriters who worshipped famous American crooners like Frank Sinatra—and who were inspired by him, and by others, to create this unique musical style.

In his most recent book, *Carnaval No Fogo: Cronica de Uma Cidade Excitante Demais*, Castro takes on the history of the city of Rio. In doing so he has achieved the very difficult task of cov-

Reuben F. Johnson, a writer and political analyst, is working with the family of Antonio Carlos Jobim to establish a museum in Rio in honor of the composer.

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ering all aspects of a city rich in history and tradition, but without getting bogged down in details or engaging in exhaustive historical arguments that would produce a tome so thick that even the most ardent fans of Brazil would give it a miss. The English-language edition, translated by John Gledson, is as loyal to the original Portuguese as the English rendition of his history of Bossa Nova. Once again, Castro's wit, tongue-in-cheek humor, and art of linking descriptions of famous locations with the actions of historical figures are well preserved. He combines the ability of a journalist to interpret the importance of everyday events with the historian's eye for tracing cultural and political trends to their roots. His love for his native city, and the pride he takes in being a Brazilian, also shine through, but without the chauvinism (or anti-Americanism) that is too often a substitute for descriptive skill.

Castro starts his story in the summer of 1502, when a Portuguese fleet commanded by Gonçalo Coelho and led by the famous Florentine navigator Amerigo Vespucci, sailed into Guanabara bay. The date was January 1 (hence the inspiration for the name of the city, Rio de Janeiro). He then chronicles the different eras in the city's development, showing how the French, Portuguese, English, and others exerted their influence at one time or another and created the mix of cultures that Rio remains today. But beyond this well-researched and meticulous dialogue of dates, names, and facts, Castro also paints the picture of the social and artistic history of the city—and how the *cariocas* came to be who they are.

Castro is the epitome of a *carioca*, a slang word meaning a resident of Rio, but he hastens to add that one does not have to be born here to become one. Those born in the city are *cariocas da gema*, literally "from the yolk of the egg," but there are plenty of *cariocas* who originate somewhere else. This is one of Castro's key themes, that Rio is a city of the world and bereft of anything resembling an apartheid mentality. It is the genuine melting pot that so many cities and nations strive to create but few achieve, and is seen in the ability of anyone who moves to Rio to become "one of us." Castro writes that this "loss of nationality" is considered an achievement of Rio culture and society, and points out that it rarely runs both ways: "A *carioca* could never be Swiss, but a Swiss might be able to become *carioca*."

Agencia Estado / Polaris / Tasso Marcello

The Prince of Wales and friend, 2002

I was lucky enough on a hotter-than-normal recent evening in Rio to hear Castro give a lecture on his book and the city at a bookshop that sits just a few short blocks from the most famous section of Rio, the Ipanema oceanfront. The shop, Toca do Vinicius, is named for Vinicius de Moraes, the poet and writer who served as a Brazilian diplomat to France. That was all before he met and collaborated with the songwriter Antonio Carlos Brasileiro de Almeida Jobim, or "Tom" Jobim, as he was more commonly known. Together they produced many of the most famous Bossa Nova songs, including "Garota de Ipanema" (The Girl From Ipanema). In the years since both men died, and the peak of the Bossa Nova movement, the shop has become a virtual mecca for those around the world looking for hard-to-find recordings and musical scores. But Toca do Vinicius is like most shops in Ipanema— barely the width of two bowling lanes, and only half as long—so lectures and small concerts are held on the pavement, in the open air, in front of the shop. On this night Castro sat at a small table and talked about how Rio is the Great Equalizer.

"Here in Ipanema," he said, "there is only a small space between the ocean on one side and the lagoon further inland . . . people from all income levels use the same beach, drink beer in the same oceanfront bars, use the same cafes and coffeehouses. It is not unlikely to see a poor beach bum sitting at the same bar with a world-famous footballer—and both of them dressed almost completely alike. . . . Rio reduces everyone, whatever their origin, their fame or social class, to a shirt worn outside the trousers, a battered pair of Bermudas, and a pair of flip-flops."

The result is that Rio—despite random crime and violence associated

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with the drug trade in the *favelas*, the sprawling slums that surround the city—is more civilized in many respects than other major cities. Castro credits this world in which young and old, rich and poor, share the same spaces for creating a city that "has no suicide bombers, radical separatists, young neo-nazis who beat up immigrants, sexual perverts, men who strangle rich old women, spotty youths who shoot their schoolmates dead, psychopathic snipers and other dangerous maniacs who contribute to the fame of Scotland Yard and the FBI."

The dangers posed by violent crime aside, Rio is one of the most beautiful places on earth, and also one of the most inviting. But he also warns that "the friendliest city in the world" is in danger not from small-time criminals and drug lords, but from the politicians who, for the past four decades, have been seeking to either minimize Rio's importance or destroy its legacy under the guise of modernizing it.

Rio was the capital of Brazil for over 300 years until 1960, when the artificially created capital, Brasília, was founded. Yet despite the change in venue, people still identify Rio as the center of all things Brazilian. All of the famous images of the nation—Sugar Loaf, the statue of Christ the Redeemer atop the mountain at Corcovado, the black and white ceramic tile mosaic pavements along Copacabana beach—are in Rio, and not in Brasília or Sâo Paulo, the Brazilian megapolis that is South America's largest city. But various efforts have been made over time—some of them successful—to demolish this cornucopia of cultural landmarks.

"In the name of hygiene, progress and modernization, and all of the wonders they are supposed to bring," Castro writes, "megalomaniacs equipped with two deadly weapons—a pencil and a blank sheet of paper—have persuaded Rio's rulers to level a good part of the city's heritage. If all the lunatic projects submitted to the mayors of Rio over the years had been carried out, several of the city's symbols would have been consigned to the dustbin and we wouldn't have the city as we know it."

Castro may sound curmudgeonly, but most of his criticisms are on the mark. Which is the reason for his title, *Carnival Under Fire*. Carnival is the once-a-year Lenten bacchanalia that symbolizes much of what Rio is, and what the city and its history embody. Castro laments how the federal powers-that-be have been trying to chip away at Rio's prosperity and prominence by eliminating the buildings and traditions that made it what it is. This "death by a thousand cuts" began when the capital was moved to Brasília: Bit by bit, federal agencies moved out, followed by the banks, businesses, and (very reluctantly, ten years later) the diplomatic corps. The city's industry disappeared, the shipbuilding yards rusted away, and 14 of Rio's 21 newspapers died out over the next 20 years, along with all 15 of its weekly magazines.

The passion to reduce Rio's influence in Brazil continues to this day, the current cause being the rivalry between the governor of the Rio de Janeiro state and President Luiz Ináçio Lula da Silva. Many of the city's ancient buildings and landmarks need to be refurbished or preserved, but the city is persevering. Investments made in new hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls began to pay off in the 1990s, and today Rio is thriving: The population of the Copacabana district, one of the most popular tourist areas, has grown from 183,000 in 1960 to almost a quarter-million today.

In spite of all attempts to do it harm, Rio remains (as the Portuguese title of Ruy Castro's book calls it) "a city that is too exciting." ♦

Yadda Yadda Yadda

18 ways to watch 'Seinfeld' without laughing.

BY MAX WATMAN

Television encourages a sedentary lifestyle, and is an unimaginative medium rife with cliché, but the same could be said for books or politics, so that critique, as it were, rather withers on the vine. TV offers football and the Kentucky Derby. I have nothing against television. It's just a mindless pastime and a way to get a grip on all sorts of valuable info about what new kinds of toothpaste are for sale. It's not as if it's being taught in our schools or taken seriously. It's not as if my son could get through college by writing essays about *Seinfeld*.

Alas.

Seinfeld, Master of Its Domain
Revisiting Television's Greatest Sitcom
Edited by David Lavery and Sara Lewis Dunne
Continuum, 282 pp., $19.95

Max Watman is the author of Race Day: A Spot on the Rail with Max Watman.

David Lavery and Sarah Lewis Dunne have put together a compendium titled *Seinfeld, Master of Its Domain*. In their preface, Lavery and Dunne write, "If future Seinfeld DVDs are comparable to those so far released, by the time all are available—all nine seasons, all 180 episodes—we should have at our disposable [*sic*] a superb resource for examining not only the much neglected sitcom genre but television creativity itself."

I couldn't make up "disposable" if I tried. Even the fingers at the keyboard knew better than to celebrate the permanent enshrinement of something so disposable.

The premise that television is somehow neglected is bizarre. According to Nielsen Media (and they would know),

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Julia Louis-Dreyfuss, Jason Alexander, Michael Richards, Jerry Seinfeld

Corbis / David Turnley

the average household watched eight hours and eleven minutes of television a day through the course of the September 2004-September 2005 "Broadcast Year." (Television is so powerful that it's got its own calendar, like Caesar.) Even within the very covers of this book, in a chapter titled "Reflections on *Seinfeld*," the editors excerpt chunks of 18 articles written about the show from sources as disparate as *Commonweal*, *Esquire*, *TV Guide*, *National Review*, and the *New Yorker*.

Attention, I'd say, is paid. Of course, *TV Guide* is not a periodical typically lauded for its incisive commentary or deep thinking. Media journalism, no matter how fine the publication in which it appears, is more about reflecting than it is about studying. If America is going to spend the equivalent of an entire second workday's worth of man hours per household with the television, perhaps our scholars should turn their beacons to the tube. Perhaps David Lavery and Sarah Lewis Dunne have a point. The elements of our cultural life, especially those elements holding the interest of many, deserve examination.

But what we get in these pages is not sharp examination or brilliant scholarship, but hack rereadings, complicated explanations of the obvious, and cripplingly dull academy-speak. Half the time, the writers don't even seem to get the very jokes under consideration.

Joanna L. Di Mattia of Monash University contributed "Male Anxiety and the Buddy System on *Seinfeld*," in which we read that George "explains to Jerry that he has a problem sleeping with a woman who beats him at chess. With one word—checkmate—she has emasculated George, and the only way to immediately reassert his manhood is to remove this assertive and superior woman from his life. His manhood requires the absence of this model of femininity."

I'd be interested to see this author repeat herself a couple more times just to see how opaque she can make the language with which she tells you exactly what the show told you. That George was emasculated wasn't a meaning hidden deep within the symbolism of the telescript; emasculation wasn't a subtext. That's what the episode was *about*. Unlike the poetry of Wallace Stevens, say, close reading does not enhance *Seinfeld*. On *Seinfeld*, the message was on the surface.

"Seinfeld as Intertextual Comedy," by Michael Dunne of Middle Tennessee State University begins, "In the discursive field surrounding the concept of postmodernism debate has raged about many issues, including whether there even *is* such a phenomenon. It seems to me, however, that a recurrent element of arguments on all sides of these issues is an assumption that allusion, quotation, referencing, or what I have been calling 'intertextual encounters' abound in the texts of various kinds on which some might be willing to bestow . . . "

Not only is "discursive field surrounding the concept of postmodernism" exactly the opposite of a snappy lead, I'm not really sure it makes sense. I'm not confident that a "field" can "surround a concept," no matter how discursive it is.

The ingredients of popular culture rely on a toolbox full of easy reference points. Television is a referential medium, like westerns, and while *Seinfeld* made a show of flouting typical sitcom underpinnings such as ending shows with a moral, it couldn't have operated as a television show without what Dunne is calling the "intertextual." The thesis that *Seinfeld* is intertextual (it's worth noting, of course, that a show isn't even textual) is supported by evidence such as: "Timeliness is also a key factor in the episode called 'The Checks,' when Elaine hooked up with Bret, a potential new boyfriend who thinks of the Eagles' hit 'Desperado' as 'his' song. Because this song dates back to the mid-seventies, this precise allusion effectively situates Bret as a classic-rock-listening Yuppie."

Not to put too fine a point on it, but no, it doesn't. The precision of the allusion was funny. He was a dork with a starry look in his eyes and an absurd, utterly invented, habit of shushing people when a schlocky, melodramatic song came over the speakers. In the show, to the strains of "Desperado," Bret would gaze off into the distance, imagining himself, perhaps, riding the plains.

This misinterpretation of the joke,

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or just plain not getting it, is endemic to these "scholarly" essays. Amy McWilliams writes: "The language of *Seinfeld* is certainly at the center of its appeal, and has given us wonderful new words to describe the annoying people around us (close talker)."

"Close talker" is a reference to one of the many types of annoying people invented on *Seinfeld*, and the point of it was, always, that there's no such thing as "close talkers" or "man hands" or "high talkers." Or not exactly that there is no such thing, but rather that the classification of previously unobserved, or underobserved, daily minutiae is Jerry Seinfeld's act. The shtick is all about the magnification of something very petty.

It is telling that the two most insightful and spirited pieces in the book were not written in the academy. *Salon* posted an excellent piece written by Bill Wyman in 2002, and it's printed here (one flickering screen regarding another—perfect). Geoffrey O'Brien originally published "The Republic of Seinfeld" under a different title in the *New York Review of Books*. While calling into question the title of that periodical, he points out that the *ennui* that is the operating mood of Seinfeld is precisely that of a TV watcher, which is about the sharpest observation in the whole book.

Those two essays demonstrate clearly that insight tends to be more profound outside of the academy than inside it; the scholarship represented here is shoddy. One author points out that the show has inspired "everything from the coffee shop banter in Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction* to a knock-off porno film, *Hindfeld*."

What kind of student would opt for the thin gruel of television scholarship? Wouldn't a scholar ambitious enough to put words to paper rather be writing about something with some teeth? It's like digging a hole in a flower pot: The boundaries are obvious from the start. The only thing these essayists manage to do is to simplify their explication to such a stupefying degree that even their elucidation of the most obvious is like a flash of light. Certainly that's not the reason anyone went to graduate school? For whom does the dull flicker of the television suffice?

Clearly, the scholars here suffer from the same *ennui* pointed out by O'Brien: They have become sadly inured to the tedium of television, and with their minds dulled by it, have taken up the only topic they grasp. But since they have only television, they aren't bright enough to illuminate anything. And it dawns on the reader that the existence of this book is proof that they ought not to teach television at our universities. ♦

Outer Limits

Still diabolical, but less shocking, than the original.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The Omen, the 30-year-old horror movie that has just been remade more faithfully than almost any other film in history, was both a landmark genre picture and a low point in American popular culture. Somber and brutally effective, *The Omen* gave Gregory Peck the role of his lifetime (yes, I am saying he was better in this than in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), scared the wits out of its audience, and spawned two sequels.

The Omen

Directed by John Moore

The scene that makes it truly distinctive is also the reason *The Omen* deserves to be consigned to the annals of Hollywood infamy. In one of the most disturbing moments in the history of cinema, Gregory Peck—the very image of stolid American decency—holds a ritual dagger above a 5-year-old's chest and aims it at the child's heart. "No, Daddy, please don't," the boy sobs as Peck goes in for the kill. Director Richard Donner and screenwriter David Seltzer pull off a coup. They succeed in making their audience actually root for the murder of a child. It's a remarkable trick. It's also despicable.

Now, it's true that Donner and Seltzer have left the audience in no doubt that Damien is the Antichrist, sired by Satan and a jackal. We've seen the boy try to murder his adoptive mother, and we've seen several other people die in supernaturally gruesome fashion (impaled on a stake, beheaded) for taking an interest in his true identity. Peck is urged to kill his own child by two devout priests who explain that he is not a boy but the incarnation of the Devil. But that's not what we *see*. Movies are very literal. They show us two-dimensional images that aren't in the least ambiguous. And at the end of *The Omen*, what we *see* is a man trying to stab a child to death, and we are supposed to want him to do it.

The Omen's satanic plotline followed in the footsteps of *Rosemary's Baby*, released in 1968, and *The Exorcist*, which came out in 1973. But it was something different. Both earlier movies were portraits of maternal anxiety—*Rosemary's Baby* a study of pregnancy paranoia that turns out to be all too justified, and *The Exorcist* a tale of a girl in the throes of adolescence who becomes a hypersexualized monster. Neither film asks us to accept the

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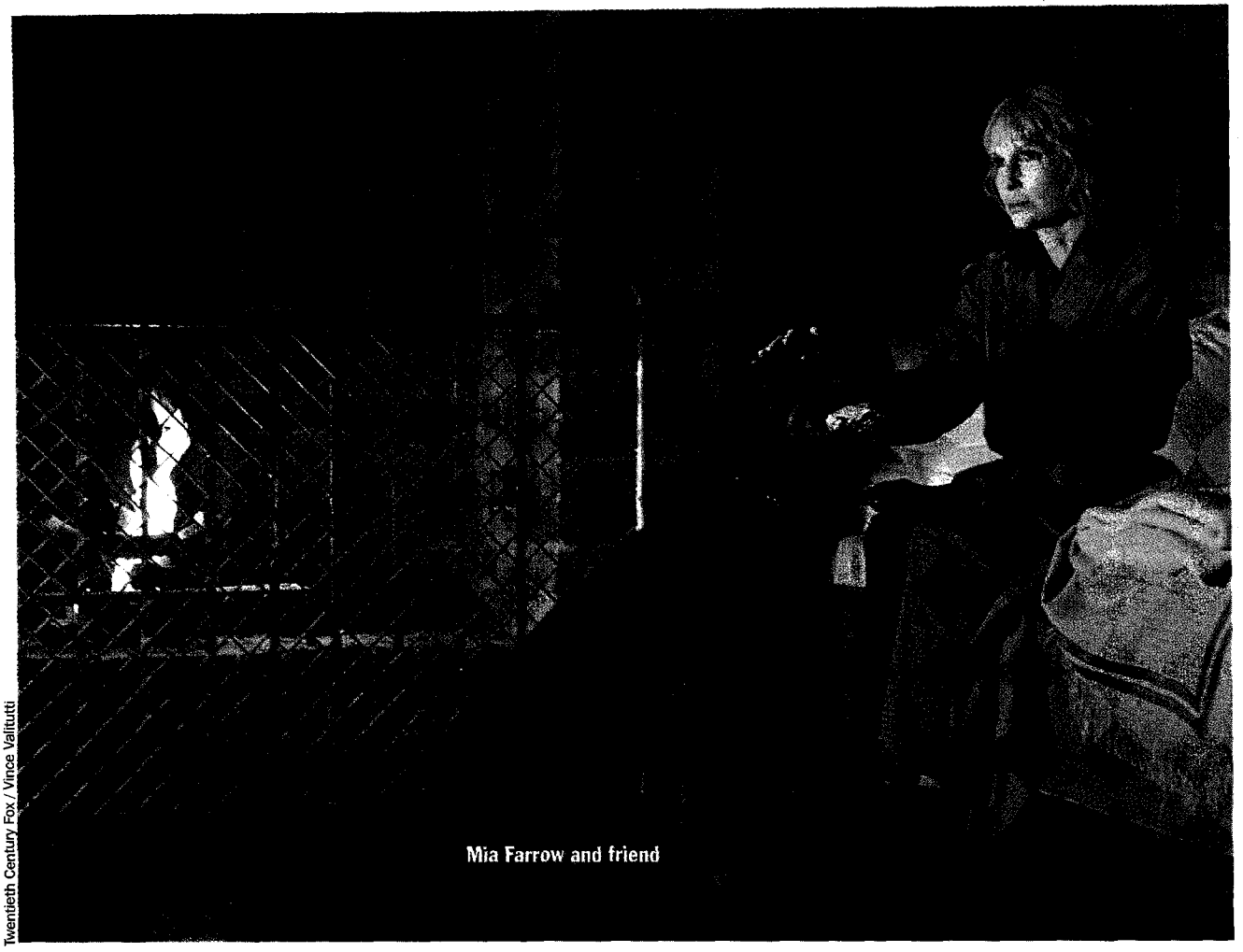

Twentieth Century Fox / Vince Valitutti

Mia Farrow and friend

sacred responsibility of a parent to slaughter his own child.

Screenwriters are taught that they always need to "raise the stakes" in their scripts, particularly scripts in genres like horror. Take everything to its logical limit, push the boundaries of what's been done, and you might have something. This form of narrative escalation reached its outer limit with *The Omen*. Movies have long sought to make the audience complicit in killing—to cheer when the good guys off the bad guys, even to laugh triumphantly when the bad guys are done in. But instilling an eagerness to witness the murder of a small child crossed a line into a kind of moral barbarism that no mainstream Hollywood movie I can think of has ever crossed since.

The new *Omen*, which was released last week on 6/6/06, is a carbon copy in every sense of the term—it's everything the old movie was, but it has lost the original's crispness. The screenplay is once again credited to David Seltzer, though there is a new director, John Moore, who treats Donner's original direction as though he were an art restorer just bringing out the old colors for a contemporary audience. There are a few new scares here, but even they have been borrowed from a 1970s movie—nightmare visions that Moore lifted straight out of Ken Russell's sensational *Altered States* (1980).

If you close your eyes, you might mistake the deep voice of its star, Liev Schreiber, for Peck's. But open those eyes and it isn't Peck there but an unimposing young fellow who is not in the least believable as this country's ambassador to Great Britain. The same is true of Julia Stiles, who seems like a petulant teenager and not the lush, motherly creature Lee Remick was. The kid who plays Damien seems to have been cast because of his resemblance to the original Damien. Even Mia Farrow, who is creepily sweet as Damien's devilish nanny, can't hold a candle to Billie Whitelaw's portrayal 30 years ago.

And though the ending is exactly the same, it doesn't have the elemental power of the original. In both, the murdering father begins reciting the Lord's Prayer as he lays his son down. As it happens, I saw the original film in a theater on the same block on the Upper West Side of Manhattan where I saw the remake last week, with the same kind of urban, inner-city audience. The audience sat in shocked silence in 1976. This time, someone shouted out, "He should wait to say the prayer after he kills him." The audience erupted in laughter.

That's what happens when you try to put a nonentity like Liev Schreiber in Gregory Peck's shoes. ♦

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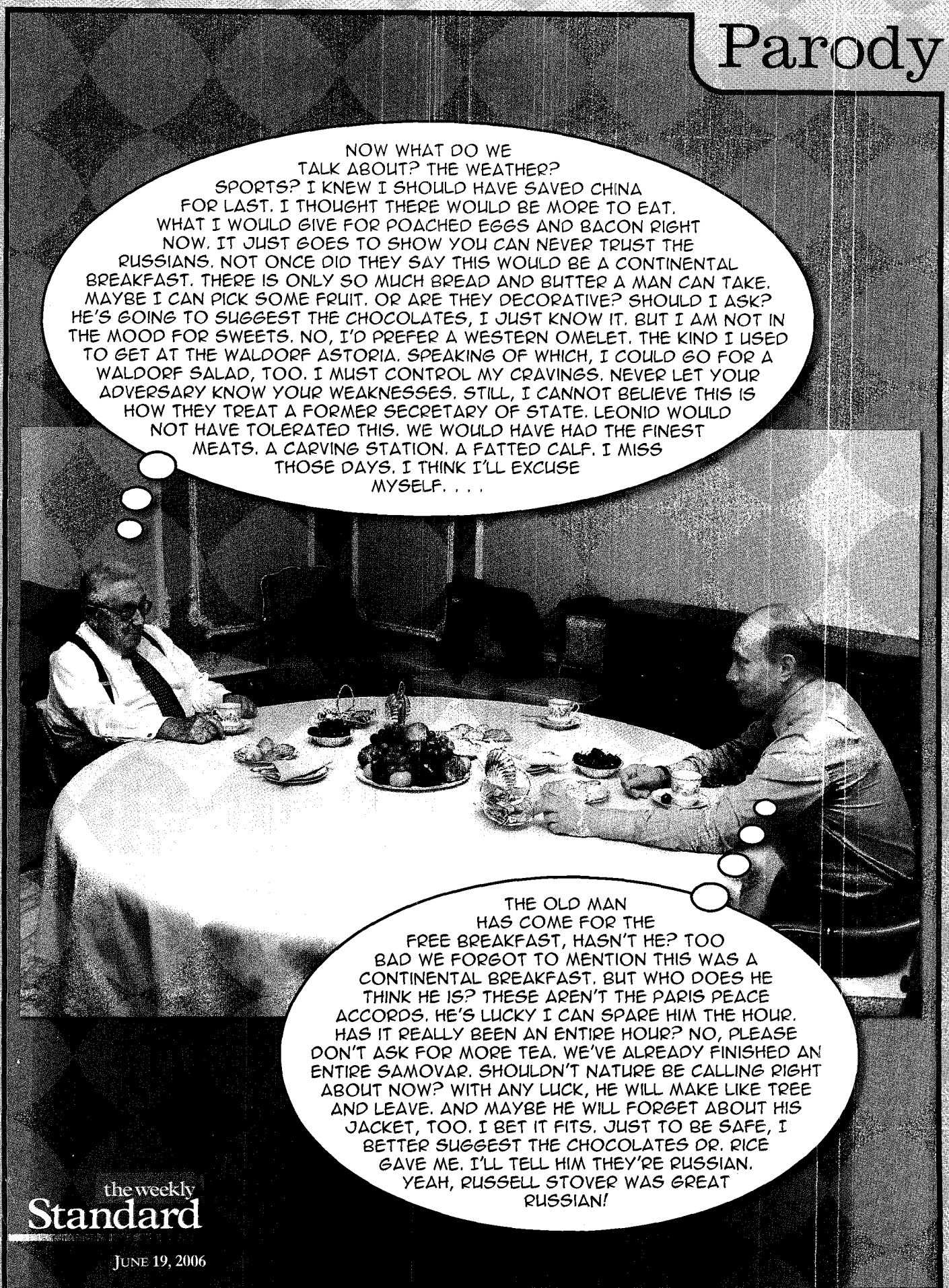
Parody



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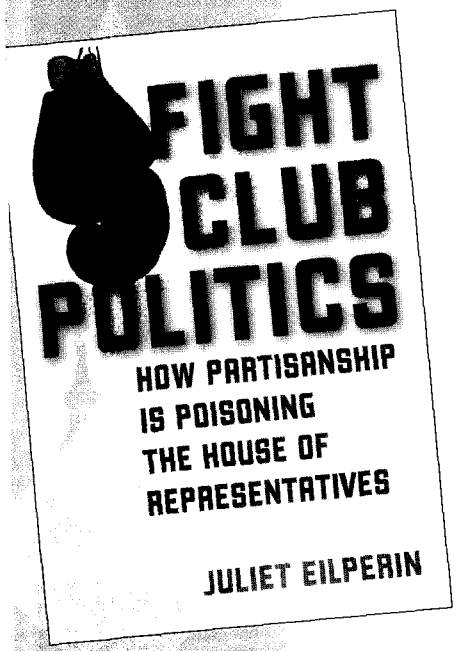

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